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/128/ Chapter 6

THE CULTS

794 The purpose of the Bambara cults, whether they are of individuals, families, or villages, is to promote the functioning of the universe in an orderly way, which includes the preservation and conservation of individuals and the whole community in their spiritual or material forms.

The following chapter is not exhaustive. We have described a certain number of cults selected from the most representative. Under their apparently diverse aspects, shown in their purposes as well as in their modes, all are integrated into the system of Bambara thought.

I. Individual and Family Cults

778 794 Over individual altars sheltered within the family enclosure or preserved in the private room (ǒèsó) of their owner, the rituals of "maintaining self" are practiced. They assure the stability of physical (ǰuafebla, ǰuafebyeni) and social (dyamana tigi jigi) forces; they afford protection outside dangers (mbe ndyugu kǎ); they are the temporary containers of souls at the time of death (kere la boli ni).

Since man must, in many circumstances of his life, remedy any depletion of his strength, these altars represent repositories, relays, in which at least certain elements of his being are integrated. They permit him to regroup or revitalize his physical or psychical forces for his own well-being as well as for that of the community.

A. The ǰeso

In the homes the movable altars are kept in a room called ǰeso (literally, house of man), which is reserved for the /129/ owner and which contains, besides his weapons and agricultural implements, family altars, either collective or individual (1) depending upon

1. The following description is that of the house of Tètè, an important citizen of Banankoroni.

778 whether he is head of a family, head of a religious society, or a
794 bachelor.

These objects are hung from the ceiling or hidden away in corners from the looks of people and the risks of impurity. The walls of the room, daubed up to a third of their height /130/ with black earth,

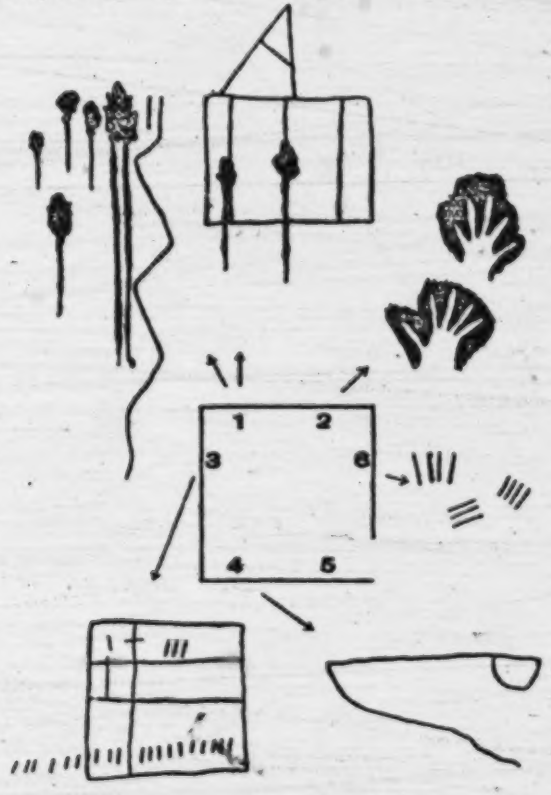

Fig. 10 — Diagram of the česo of Tètè, important citizen of Banankoroni and reproduction of the drawings on the walls: 1. The ancestors and their home. 2. The hands of the living. 3. The sky, space, the earth, and the 22 categories. 4. The Komo's whip. 5. A red stain. 6. The owner (three) and his two wives (four and four).

symbolizing Faro's presence and protection, are covered with paintings and drawings.

778 794 532 On one of the walls, small lines representing the ancestors and a broken line representing the human person are drawn with millet mash; on another, engraved with a sharp point, is a schematic geometrical figure of the ancestral home; it is accompanied by the silhouettes of two hands (see Fig. 10, 1 and 2), the hands of the living, "crossed and reaching out to the world of the dead." The left hand, symbol [826] of disorder, incertitude, and the variations of human conscience, is placed below to the right of the other to recall man's obligation towards his right hand, symbol of order, righteousness, fidelity, and work (1). Thus arranged, the hands express complete submission of

1. In making this drawing the following words are repeated: "I place my right hand on the wall night and day," neben kinin bolo da koko la ǯu ni kle.

the living to the ancestors.

Farther away are drawn the divisions of the universe (Fig. 10, 3) with the help of a square divided into three compartments symbolizing from top to bottom: the sky and water, the air, the earth.

In the upper square to the left, a line represents Faro in all his power, sole master of sky, water, and life. A horizontal line recalls his domination over the world. The lines that follow are his children. The total indicates the feminine form of the spirit.

All individual or family sacrifices offered to Faro are performed over his sign which the officiator rubs with copper and crushed tomatoes in order "to thank the spirit who protects his dya, and to pray to the spirit to give his wife children."

The central rectangle is the domain of Téliko: air and wind. The small line which vertically bisects the square on the left represents the spirit attempting to penetrate into Faro's plan to vanquish him. His defeat is indicated by the fact that the major portion of the line is situated in Téliko's domain, since the latter violated only temporarily the boundaries of his adversary.

The lower rectangle outlines the earth, seat of the Soba spirits. The row of 22 short lines which covers it recalls the 22 elements of creation, "the 22 things indispensable to man in this world."

On another wall, fire is indicated by two whips: that of Faro, lightning, and that of Komo, the law. They also recall "the power

778 of the initiates' word" and are exposed to fire to increase this power
794 (Fig. 10, 4). Beside them, /131/ a large red stain, dyoli ǰikin,
532 painted in ochre, states that man is the sacrificer, that the cult has immolation as its basis. Of such a man it is said that: "he reckons with the proof of the blood (1)" (Fig. 10, 5).

1. Dyoli tamaše mine ba.

Above the bed which consists of a simple mat placed on the ground, three engraved lines symbolize the man and two four lines the two women who alternately share his bed (Fig. 10, 6).

778 In certain villages, the drawings are made by an instrument called
794 ngwoni, used during the rituals of the year's "renewal" (2).
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2. Particularly at Banankoroni.

The point of baobab wood, which is used for engraving, is as slim as a slat and fits on to a kind of racket made of sunzun wood which holds a net of da fibers. The hide of a male goat, called soni wolo ni (literally, soul of the skin of sacrifice), and two handles of ngolobe wood (3) complete the assemblage. The net, made of sixteen cotton

3. Combretum michrantum.

threads dyed with red ochre, kolo, is called ngwoni kene ba (literally, great space of the ngwoni) and represents Faro.

778 Before being used, the instrument is washed with water which will
794 be used later to cook the food for the family. Next, tomatoes are
532 pressed on the net and the juice runs into the hide which forms a pocket; holding the point in the right hand and the handle in the left, one then makes the drawings on the wall of the česo. The seeds of the fruit remain in the pouch until the following year to serve as a testimony to the offering. Next, with a red hot knife the following lines are engraved on the object: four lines, representing Faro, and two 16 lines, multiples of four, the female symbol. After each cut, "a rag saturated with fresh water is placed on it to soothe the pain." The frame is saturated with kola nut extract and four dots, the womb of women, are also marked with a black stone, kolofin. An egg is then smashed on the object to "refresh the soul of the ensemble."

B. The Altars

178 Each family head wears a small altar called kere la boli ni (literally, 194 little side altar), which maintains relations with the souls of the members of the family for which he is, in part, responsible. /132/ In case of illness he offers sacrifices on this boli for the recovery of the patient. In case of death, he keeps the soul in it temporarily before carrying it to the collective altar of the Komo (1). He also sacrifices on this

1. The society, the altars, and the role of the Komo are described on pages ff.

altar at the time of sowing.

[763] If the family head is himself very ill, the altar is placed on his head in an effort to replace the soul which is escaping with that which the altar contains. If he dies, it is placed on his chest to take in the [764] soul which is then transported to the sanctuary of the Komo. At the end of seven days, the object is given to the deceased's eldest son who, upon becoming family head, sacrifices two goats to the Komo on this occasion.

The ɣuafebla (literally, worn at the hip) is made by a father for his son when the latter attains maturity and is on the point of leading a man's life, farming his own field and founding a family.

If there is no Komo in the village, the father may make it earlier, right after the name-giving ceremony.

The altar is made of hyena tails, scorpion tails, and whole peppers tied with a little stick; it represents the owner's flesh and blood.

It receives an annual sacrifice at the time of sowing after the collective offering tothe Komo. This takes place in the family courtyard in the presence of all the members of the family (2). Moreover,

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2. The cult rendered on this altar brings the intervention of the Sago spirit whose agricultural role is still obscure at the present stage of the inquiry. He taught men how to water their fields.

"Two birds konodyanfi began to circle and sing above the workers in the fields;

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the latter abandoned their hoes in order to watch them. The birds fetched water with their beaks on the shore of a neighboring pond and returned to pour it at the foot of a millet stalk, the ear of which was not yet formed. The men put a mark on this stalk in order to recognize it and later observed that it produced a finer ear than the others. Imitating the bird, they dampened their plantings and watered their fields; their harvest was considerably improved by it. They kept up this habit and, in acknowledgment, produced a cult to the Sago spirit whose emissaries the birds were and who comes to slake his thirst at the Čuafebla."

778 it is the object of sacrifices when important business is being handled:
794 marriage, private or administrative action, fight against an epidemic.
[428] A son may inherit his father's altar and keep it with his own which he wears tied to his hip.

The Čuafebyčni (literally, little horn at the hip) is composed of a cowrie, taken from Faro's granary, copper which is the altar's soul /133/ (ni), pepper, charcoal, and honey. This mixture is introduced into a ram's horn decorated with cowries at its opening and often wrapped in a red cloth bearing the same ornamentation.

[782] The altar is consecrated on those of the Komo, over which it is passed seven times. The throats of victims are cut, their blood is collected in a gourd, and the boli dipped into it three times before being taken out in the sun to dry.

Its role is one of protection. Its owner carries it during the Komo ceremonies to defend himself against spells, korti, which may be cast by someone in the audience.

It also maintains the integrity of its owner's forces. If the latter faints or goes into a trance, he is returned to his normal state by completely renewing the ingredients which constitute it. When the horn is emptied of its contents, "both the soul of the altar and that of the man" are removed. The container is rinsed out with water from the

778 Niger after which the reconstitution of the altar is carried on and is
794 equivalent to "the taking on a new soul." Each family member comes to the aid of the party concerned: the father gives copper, the women, peppers, the children, charcoal; a new cowrie is removed from Faro's granary.

778 The mbendyugukã (literally, I am on the enemy) is an individual
794 altar which permits its owner to overcome his adversaries and even to
754 attack their life.

The person who wishes to own one makes it after the death of an enemy. He goes secretly to unearth the corpse, shaves off its hair, cuts off its tongue and nails, and removes the eyes.

An elderly owner of such an altar takes it with him to the person who wishes to make one. The latter prepares and mixes the ingredients according to a special ritual and ties them to a hyena's tail. Before a witness who belongs to his age grade, the elder rubs the new altar on the old one seven times while reciting a prayer to consecrate it; he then returns it to its owner (1).

> 1. Because of its evil powers, the altar may not be made and entrusted to its owner except in the presence of a known witness.

The symbolism of the various parts composing it explain the use to which this altar will later be put. The tongue of the dead man contains his voice and gives to that of the owner the strength to convince those who contradict him in arguments as well as in council meetings. The eyes of the dead man permit him to see what others may not see, or even to blind his enemies by poisoning them with his nails. The hair, evidence of the other parts /134/ of the corpse, contains the nyama of the deceased and is an essential part of the mbendyugukã.

[595] The owner of this altar, which excludes the number four, marries only three wives. Moreover, he cannot mix his own hair with that of another without risking death.

[782] Because of its aggressive character, the mbendyugukã demands victims, dogs or roosters, of red coloring. It gives to whomever owns it a strength which will always be greater than that of his competitors in whatever he may undertake.

778 794 754 For this reason it receives sacrifices at the time when the fields are being worked, for trade, marriage, war, and hunting where the person risks his life; it helps to fight illness and death. Immediately after the first sacrifice, it captures the personality and aggressiveness of the dead man and puts them on its owner, making him doubly dangerous to those with whom he is in conflict. But on the other hand, the danger may turn against him and, to a greater extent than anyone else, he risks his life at the slightest broken taboo.

Furthermore, the Komo who disapproves of such operations may, if he considers it useful, loosen the dead man's nyama on the person who is using his spiritual forces and put him in danger of death. Thus a Bambara will hesitate a long time before owning such an altar; in fact very few individuals assume this heavy responsibility.

C. The Chief's Seat

778 622 In the courtyard of the home of a family head or village chief can be found a pile of wood stuck on the ground and called dyamana tigi jigi (literally, support of the owner of the world) (Fig. 11). This seat symbolizes at once the chief, his power, his social and religious role of supporting the group (1).

1. The seat described below was observed at Banankoroni in the courtyard of the village chief. A similar one is found at Soroba.

The pieces of bent wood which compose it are planted rather deep into the earth above a series of objects. One of these pieces, with a simple bend (in a) is called sinzin, support; the two others, shaped like a T, are called jigi ba jigi (in b) (literally, support of the big support).

F782 766 The whole lies over the body of an albino (c) buried in a tomb having a ritual form, covered with ancient clothing dyed in wolo and speckled with small black spots made of /135/ bone ash (kolofin), which represent at the same time the embryo in the womb of women and Faro. The head is covered with the cap of primitive men (e).

In (d), three pickets, symbols of man, are stuck through the skin of the albino's forehead; this skin had been removed and seven ritual

622 178 of polished stone called fara yele, "stone that rejoices," expresses the wish that the chief's rule prosper.

The seat, taken as a whole, represents the chief's skeleton and his joints. It is erected upon various elements which sum up his ties to the ancestors and the supernatural powers, indicating his responsibility and contributing to the maintenance of his strength. It is situated in such a way that all the events in the courtyard take place around it. and that nothing which is said is out of earshot. As a center of the family household, as the symbol of the industrious and responsible man, it is the framework of the community which it upholds, just as the chief does through his physical endurance and moral firmness. The whole village "leans upon the chief's joint."

Each morning and evening, the jigi ba jigi and the ba jigi /137/ are greeted so that the chief may be strong, that his family may increase, that he may foster the ancestral beliefs. Offerings and [782] libations are made upon the seat and upon the body of the chief when his authority is questioned. In (b) tomato juice is being poured; in (a), representing the elbow or the knee, the water which has been used for ritual bathing of these same joints; at the foot, in (n), the fowls' throats are cut while the officiator, before pouring down the blood of the sacrifice, blows into a small hole dug in the ground; finally, in (l) the water which was used to wash the chief's whole body is poured in.

[826] In this way the chief's joints, which are the seat of his strength and his procreative seed, are purified and fortified.

II. Village Cults

794 The village, as a physical entity, and its inhabitants are placed under the protection of the supernatural powers and of the ancestors. Faro is directly invoked at all water spots.

If the village is situated at the river's edge, the rituals are addressed to the Faro tyin. If it is not too far from the bank, the inhabitants go out to make their offerings to the spirit. Frequently, the stream, pond, or natural well, which often determined the site chosen by the founders, is though to be inhabited by an incarnation of Faro whose name is revered and to whom all offer a cult.

On the other hand, each village is placed under the protection of the dasiri, a special spirit delegated by Faro.

194 The ancestors are worshipped in various places: at the doors and
769 thresholds of houses, at the cemetery, and at stone altars placed at
778 the intersections of lanes and in public squares. These positive cults, which are aimed at the acquisition of beneficial forces, have as a counterpart, cults in which the villagers rid themselves of all their unlucky and infectious elements; these take place, in particular, at the corssroads, dangu, which are placed under the guardianship of the earth Soba spirits.

It would be impossible to treat all of the cults of the Bambara villages. Among these, three have caught our attention; they concern the dasiri, the dangu, and the ancestral altar stones.

A. The dasiri

194 The word dasiri (literally, which binds the mouth) designates the
776 invisible spirit, Faro's representative entrusted with watching over
778 /138/ the village, as well as the seat of this spirit and, sometimes too, the animal which accompanies it or symbolizes it.

The spirit haunts a rock, a thicket, or a tree situated near the village; the approaches to this spot are reserved for the elder in charge of the ritual (1).

1. In Massala and Soroba it is a baobab
[824] tree; in Sama, a tamarind tree, etc.
See the observations on the dasiri collected by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné /Monograph of Djenne/, pp. 137-138; L. Tauxier. La Religion Bambara, pp. 195-208.

[187 Generally the place is pointed out by the geomancer at the time
361] the village is founded, or else determined by an event which occurred at that time. It is after this operation that the buildings are erected to the west of the chosen spot.

If the dasiri is a tree, no one may burn or cut its branches. In
[822] many cases it cannot be approached by anyone dressed in black or indigo, colors which represent obscurity. No Peul may sit in its
[563] shade (2). Any infraction of these taboos brings about the death of

2. The reasons for the taboo concerning the Peul have not yet been ascertained.

794 776 778 [563] In some villages, the sacrificer never consumes butter or milk, foods which the Peul furnish the Bambara.

the culprit and deprives the villagers of their protector.

The spirit of the dasiri sometimes has as its compansion an animal 794 which seems to represent the group's ancestor. At Ségou, it is a 776 crocodile; at Ouélenguena, a she-ass; at Koulikoro, a monkey; in 825 other places it is a male goat which is replaced when it dies. At Konodimini there are a series of deep intercommunicating wells which would have served as homes for the ancestors. These holes are at present occupied by hyenas which are considered to be incarnations of the blacksmiths of former times and which are the dasiri of the place.

The dasiri's animal is free to enter homes and to eat what it finds. It is often fed by the inhabitants. No one may attack it and whoever breaks this taboo, set on by a vengeful nyama of which he cannot [582 rid himself, risks being forbidden to marry, even being no longer 626] tolerated in his native village (1).

1. This was, at Soroba, the case of Dji Diara, who, after killing a hyena, could not marry as no woman was willing to link her destiny to his.

As its name indicates, the function of the dasiri is to maintain 794 the stability and integrity of the village. It is the "support of the 776 inhabitants' lives"; the numerous rituals (individual or collective), 782 of which it is the object, reveal the importance of its role as well as the diversity of the beings invoked. To Faro are addressed prayers for rain; to the ancestors prayers for questions /139/ concerning the family; and to the spirit of the tree when it is a matter of stopping an epidemic. But directly or indirectly, any sacrifice offered to the dasiri is offered to Faro. The victims (sheep or fowl) and the offerings (cotton bands, kola nuts) are always white (see Pl. 3, b).

When children reach the age of six or seven, they are led to the 794 tree; they sit on its roots upon which kola nut juice is spat, and are, 778 by this fact, introduced into the village cult. They are then presented 852 to all the allies senánku and especially to the blacksmiths with whom they proceed to joke.

794 Each year a sacrifice bringing together all the inhabitants is offered
776 to the dasiri and is terminated by communal eating of the sacrificial
782 victim. The first fruits of the harvest are also brought to it by the sacrificer.

B. The dangu

776 The crossroads dangu or danku (literally, boundary of the head) are
778 inhabited by the Soba spirits who, under Faro, constantly intervene
823 in human affairs. Everything placed at this spot belongs to them,
783 and no one passes by without leaving an offering or a token of his presence: a tool, raw cotton, seeds, cloth. A travelling stranger kneels and deposits a little ash or some cotton; if not, he cleans off a little space on which he spits before leaving. A child passing by will greet it with these words: "Crossroads, my soul is in your hands." On the occasion of any event concerning the individual; the family, or the community, red kola nuts are placed at the crossroads and the following words uttered: "You, crossroads, I entrust my head to you; you are my support; I say, you, crossroads" (1).

1. E dangu m be ni ku kalifa, do i la ni jigi be fe, ngo e dangu.

The corssroad, as an ideal public thoroughfare, is the chosen spot where one easily rids oneself of the nyama which any individual keeps and carries about with him. All that is impure, unlucky, and undesirable for the individual or the community is left at the crossroads. Objects which have belonged to dead people are also left there. The forces which are thus gotten rid of are supposedly absorbed by the spirits for whom they constitute a kind of nourishment which will then be returned to men in the form of gifts free of any taint.(2)

2. See p. 258.

/140/ Several examples will illustrate the role played by the crossroads in the community:

Any man who has wounded an animal or squashed an insect is affected in his own tere by that of the victim. He goes to the crossroads, kneels, and prays, depositing at the same time a band of cotton, an egg, and ashes. The band of woven cotton, symbol of

778 stones at the time of the collective ceremonies called the years
211 "renewal" (1).

1. See pp. ff.

III. The Religious Societies

794 Members of groups formed by families in a broad sense, headed by patriarchs and owning lands which cannot be divided, also belong to other collective groups called flâ; these are formed by the age grade of circumcision, excision, or initiation, and grouped around altars which are their own and which possess their special rituals.

These societies are called by the general term dyo (2) meaning

476 2. It is appropriate to distinguish the religious societies, dyo, described in this work, from the mutual aid societies, tõ, of apparently secular character. The latter are also very numerous and exist in all the Bambara villages.

These organizations are strongly hierarchical and are placed under the direction of responsible chiefs. Their members perform communal work which concerns the life of the village: felling trees, clearing, cultivation of individual or communal fields, house construction, etc., and participation in marriage ceremonies. The detailed study of the tõ whose role is considerable would be indispensable to an understanding of the social and economic organization of this tribe.

The participation of the tõ in agricultural work will be described by Mme. de Ganay in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture (in press).

794 "to build, "to edify" and also "secret." This term recalls that each individual constitutes an element of the whole group formed by the society.

794 For male members, the large dyo, the principal aim of which is the preservation of spiritual forces and the maintenance of the person in daily life, are the Komo, the Kworè, the Nama, the Kono, the Nago, and the Nya. Women are grouped around muso dyo, about which little information has been obtained. The uncircumcised belong to the ndomo (or Ɓeble). In addition, members of these societies are divided into groups which may be independent of age grades and which are designated by signs.

The Komo

The word Komo indicates the complex theoretically made up in each village of society members, living and dead, the sanctuary and its altars (boli), the responsible chief, and the mask. It is dominated [776] and protected by the invisible power of Faro and by the presence of a particular spirit to which it is consecrated. The latter haunts a tree located in the thicket where the ceremonies take place. He is /143/ respected for having taught in ancient times the origin and role of the boli and the variations of the cult; he comes to slake his thirst on the blood of victims.

The Komo is as powerful as it is old. The terms trodeni (ni, small) and tro ba (ba, big) are given to it, depending upon how ancient it is. Each Komo has, in addition, a particular name (1). The Komo

1. According to native etymology, komo means "taking (mo) of the pond (ko)." According to L. Tauxier, "Komo in Bambara means bad, mean, difficult" (see the Dictionnaire bambara-français of Mgr. Bazin, p. 308). On the root Ko or Kon see M. Delafosse, "Terminologie religieuse au Soudan /Religious Terminology in the Sudan/" l'Anthropologie, December, 1923, quoted by L. Tauxier. Some observations concerning the composition and functioning of the Komo society have been the object of a chapter of L. Tauxier in the Religion Bambara, pp. 272-310, which quotes works published by Ch. Monteil and the Abbe Henry. See also: Moussa Travélé, "Le Komo ou Koma /The Komo

794 or Koma/," Outremer, 1929; H. Labouret, Les Manding et leur langue.

794 The Komo society, komo tyew (literally, men, people of the Komo) is composed
561 of all circumcised men, with the exception of the griot who may under no condition become members, after an initiation performed according to the age grade, the members of which are called tonyaw. The hierarchy is rigorously respected: an earlier age grade will always be ahead of the one that follows it in all circumstances of secular or religious life. The Komo recognizes a chief, komotigi (literally, master or owner of the Komo) who preferably belongs to the caste of blacksmiths and whose function is hereditary. The son automatically assumes command of the age grade which follows that of his father. Upon the latter's death, he changes his age grade and becomes the head of his father's. In the case where the owner of the Komo dies
[304] young and his eldest son, who is to inherit the office, is not yet circumcised, he is made to undergo the operation in the night following the death, and on the following day is proclaimed chief (1).

1. In La Religion Bambara, L. Tauxier points out that in some villages the chief of the Komo exercises his power only during a seven-year term. At the end of seven years an election takes place and the function is not hereditary.

794 Because of the importance of his functions, the chief of the Komo
784 is made to respect a great number of taboos. In particular he may not penetrate into the sanctuary if he has not been chaste during the past twenty-four hours. If the taboo is broken, he must warn the men of his age grade and sacrifice two roosters upon the altars to purify himself. His wife is initiated (for she is apt to see certain ritual
[562] objects generally hidden from women because of her intimacy with the chief), but she is not present at any of the ceremonies to which only the members are /144/ admitted. If she commits adultery she
[837] brings about her husband's exclusion from the society, not only as chief but also as member.

794 The chief is often assisted by two elders belonging to his age grade,
561 whose advice he seeks in all cases concerning the community. In addition, he is always helped by young initiates. If one of these

794 distinguishes himself through diligence, obedience, and skill, he may
561 occasionally, if the elders so decide, be promoted to a more advanced age grade than his own and thus find himself on an equal footing with his elders.

794 The responsibilities of the Komo chief are considerable. He is the guardian of the altars which, as we shall later see, contain all the spiritual forces of the society; he is the only one able to manipulate them and is in charge of all the rituals which depend upon them. He
426 manages the patrimony of the group (seeds and money) which is kept in the cowrie or millet granaries, and which he may tap, in case of necessity, in order to make interest loans to members of the society who request them. (1)

1. See S. de Ganay, "Un jardin d'essai et son autel chez les Bambara /A Sample Garden and Its Altar among the Bambara/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 57-63.

But this function, honorary and advantageous from many points of view, involves not only rights but, more important, duties from which the chief cannot be exemated. He must, under no circumstances, abuse his power; he can make no decision without the agreement of the members and may not act, even in the most insignificant case, without advising each and every one of them. Each person is kept up to date as regarding the smallest details concerning the general activity of the Komo and the entire age grade must be informed at the same moment. To break these rules would mean to become exposed to the greatest dangers. Just like the head of the total family whose power is far from being absolute (2), the responsible person

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614 2. "The Mandingo fa," says Henri Labouret, in Les Manding et leur langue, "appears less free in his acts and decisions than the master of the ancient taisible fraternity. Far from being the tyrannical and strong willed autocrat whom people have frequently taken pleasure in describing, he seems to me, rather, to fulfill therole of a delegated administrator,

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an enforcement agent, expected to conform to the directives decided upon by the domestic council composed of elders and family heads (pp. 54 and 55). The aim pursued by the chief is to administer wisely a patrimony which will always remain undivided" (p. 57).

794 must exercise his office with strictness, honesty, and thoughtfulness.

A. Creation and Consecration of the Komo

The few villages not possessing a Komo are linked to the Komo in a neighboring village. If a village decides to create /145/ an independent society, it delegates its elders to an important Komo (tro ba) whose chief, after the performance of divinatory rites, makes them swear submission to the altars which he will entrust to them after consecrating them; they promise never to drop the cult, never to omit a sacrifice or offering. After the sacs brought by the petitioners have been filled with necessary products (honey, pepper, charcoal, gold, copper, etc.), they are overflowed with the blood of victims provided by those about to take office and then rubbed on the altars of the tro. The new Komo becomes the trodeni of the one from which it thus receives part of its power. In the course of the night following the consecration and the daytime transfer of the boli (1),

1. The boli, as indicated on p. 130, are linked to a category including day and sun.

a member of the society brings to his village a pembele similarly consecrated by the donors. This shift at night recalls the period of Pemba's reign preceding the appa[illegible]ion of light and the regular succession of days and nights.

Once back in the village, the society, gathered around the chief, organizes its ritual, chooses its officers, obtains the necessary masks, builds the sanctuary, and places on it the altars upon which blood sacrifices will be performed daily during this first period.

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778 B. Altars of the Komo

The boli altars occupy a distinguished place in the religious and mythological representations of the society organized around them. On the one hand they are a capsule of the universe because of their composition; on the other they are a capsule of the society as all its members are present in them. In fact, each member has provided a part of the composing elements after having impregnated them with his person by salivating over them while pronouncing his name.

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346 The altars of the Komo are kept in a sanctuary, the komo so (literally, house of the Komo), a medium sized hut built either in the chief's dwelling place, or in the bush at some distance from the village. The approach to this structure which is under Faro's protection is forbidden to the ordinary person. The chief himself never enters alone. It is said that a snake, the soul and guardian of the sanctuary, is born and lives at the top of the hut in the branches which form the roof (Pl. VI, a).

The hut is divided into a number of floors on each of which is placed /146/ an altar. The highest one contains at its center the nimara boli (literally, altar of the souls) which, as its name indicates, is the container of the souls belonging to deceased members of the society and to sacrificed animals (1). It contains, from top to bottom,

[774
782] 1. There is constant preoccupation with preserving all vital elements. The souls of sacrificed animals are the object of the same care as those of humans. Like them, they participate in the resurrection promised to everything which has lived.

hair of the dead, copper for the souls of animals, gold for those of men. These various ingredients, placed in a double sac, receive the sacrificial blood which runs between the two layers and soaks them.

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778 The nimara boli is surrounded by small individual altars which have served to channel the souls of the dying and lead them to the common receptacle (2). These small boli remain in the hut only

2. See p. 175.

●194 778 during the seven days following the death and are returned to the heir of the deceased (son or brother); they remain permanently in the sanctuary only if the dead man has no descendants. They are held up by two wooden stakes called čin ta bere (literally, sticks which collect inheritance) which keep the souls of the dead and which contain at the top wood dust from Makanta Djigui's canoe and gold at the bottom. These stakes feed the boli which they hold and the souls of the dead which they contain, thus demonstrating that the "Komo never abandons anyone and that men without descendants remain with it for ever."

[784] The taboos concerning the nimara boli are numerous and strict: it may not be removed from the sanctuary except for funerals (1). No

1. See p. 247.

woman must ever see it. No foreign cult could ever conceivably be celebrated in its presence.

On the second floor is located the n̄ȭ boli (literally, altar of millet) which contains an invigorating power intended for the society's crops. It is composed of a sac divided into six pockets which contain (from top to bottom) at the left: small millet, fonio, and copper; at the right: large millet, rice and other cereals, and gold. The sac, which opens at the top, receives at the time of agricultural ceremonies (sowing and harvest) the blood of victims offered by members of the millet society, n̄õtȭ. It must always remain damp with sacrificial blood so that the seeds which it contains will always live.

The n̄ȭ boli is also tied to two stakes called n̄ȭ boli kane (literally, protection of the n̄ȭ boli) which contain in a hollowed-out /147/ section some millet and gold; it is tied to the stakes by threads which bring it the forces they contain.

The n̄ȭ boli watches over the growth of cereals: germination, formation of the ears, maturation. It is responsible for the "head of millet" (2).

2. Each farmer is the owner of an individual n̄ȭ boli which is placed in a subordinate position under that of the Komo. In addition, the Komo's n̄ȭ boli is in close touch with the n̄ȭ boli of the Kworè, a society whose purpose is to obtain

794 778 the rain necessary for cultivation (see p. 217). The agricultural role of the Komo will be described by S. de Ganay in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture.

794 778 784 The main taboo of the ñõ boli is the loss or waste of food. If even a grain of cereal drops to the ground, or into the fire, the members of the millet society are responsible for picking it up and eating it; otherwise the Komo will punish for the failure to do so and the harvest suffers.

794 778 726 The third floor contains the nyama boli, a repository of the forces (nyama) of individuals who have died a violent death (murder, war, execution). The nyama boli used to contain in former times a stone called gõgoro kurube, considered to be the "mother" of the stones thrown by the warriors' sling. It was removed from the sac in case of war and carried to the battlefield by a twin walking at the head of the troops. On its surface were engraved a series of lines representing the king, the warriors, and their wives. It gathered all the souls of those dead in combat and received their blood as an offering.

794 778 The nyama boli is, moreover, responsible for the soul of the crops and a repository for the souls of sacrificed animals; it also receives the "nyama of the words" of the members. It shares with the ñõ boli the responsibility for the cultivations and confers in this way great power to the society.

The sac contains in its lower part a mixture of coagulated blood and gold, and in its upper part a mixture of charcoal powder, pepper, and honey, which gives power to the nyama with which the sac is loaded. The taboo of the nyama boli is the rapid death of victims [782] which are sacrificed to it; only slow death confers effective nyama.

Upon the ground of the sanctuary, along with the dance costume of the mask, nya, are placed small altars intended either for sale, or for the creation of the new Komo, or for individual purposes. Animal horns, both byẽ ba (literally, big horn) and byẽ ni (literally, little horn), are also placed there; they contain powder for ritual usage, korti, whose dangerous action takes place during the times the mask is taken out (1).

1. The various mixtures used for the religious practices of the Bambara

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often contain ingredients which have been pulverized: wood dust, charcoal powder, even powder of precious metals. Our investigation has not yet allowed us to clarify the role of this pulverization process. However, its mention by the Bambara and the frequent use of korti indicate the importance attached to this type of preparation.

/148/ Outside the hut, at the height of the nyama boli, a hook holds up the clothes of those who are killed by the Komo. The sanctuary, as well as the clothing of the mask, is daubed with black earth taken on the shore of the river representing Faro, and covered with feathers of the same color. Generally speaking, the metal [823] contained in the Komo altars gives it its strength and life. The most powerful of these is gold, silver comes next, then copper. Since each person gives an offering according to his means, the power of the altar thus depends in a certain measure on the wealth of the members of the society.

[782] Regular sacrifices upon the stakes, the bases of which sometimes contain a little wood from the historic canoe of Makanta Djigui, permit them to "maintain the pressure, the life" in the various altars.

These altars are removed from the sanctuary only upon the occasion of funerals or agricultural rites. When the mask is removed and when there are dances, replicas commonly found in the home of the chief are sometimes used instead.

The pembele is the protector of the society, the container of the forces (nyama) of the group. It is rarely placed in the sanctuary and usually kept by the chief who never exhibits it; occasionally it is watered with rain water symbolizing the work of creation.

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Before the annual ceremony called "anniversary of the Komo," drawings are made on the sanctuary by the chief or an elder; they are a reminder that the sanctuary is the link between the invisible powers and the members of the society. Besides the image of creation as an issue of the initial vibration (see Fig. 2), the head of the ancestor Koumabana, figurations of the twins, and the twenty-two fundamental signs are sometimes drawn. Finally hoes emphasize the agricultural function of the Komo (1). Granaries intended for conserving grains

1. At the time when the attention of specialists is attracted by the division of

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religious and social powers in ancient societies, it is interesting to point out that the Komo altars represent a very definite three-way division: the first is used for the conservation of spiritual forces (souls) of the group; the second presides exclusively over agricultural rites; the third is concerned with keeping the spiritual principles of individuals who died violently and of crop seeds; it played an important role during the wars. This threefold division is comparable on many points to that observed by M. Dumezil in Indo-European societies.

from the first crops /149/ used as offerings, are placed next to the sanctuaries or in the home of the chief (1).

1. In the village of Soroba the sanctuary includes seven granaries: three for small millet, sanó; four for large millet, keninge. Seven is the number symbolic of the person, three for masculinity (small millet is male) and four for femininity (large millet is female).

C. The Mask

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The man who wears the mask during the ceremonies personifies the Komo. The head is sculptured in the shape of a human face or animal face. At Konodimini, it represents the panther; at Soungoba, a stork; at Banankoroni, an eagle; at Banoumbougoula, an elephant; at Ségoubougou, a vulture. The mask is usually decorated with elements borrowed from several animals. Thus, at Soroba, the skull and horns are those of a buffalo, but the jaw is that of a crocodile. It is, moreover, ornamented with the feathers of a wild duck (2).

2. An informant, who attended Komo ceremonies in a great number of villages, asserted he had never seen the same mask twice.

794 532 The head of the mask is usually made of bone (a human or hyena skull), or of wood painted white, black, and red. The mask, per se, is made in such a way as to frighten the future initiates. Just as the soul of a dead person, which requests offerings or threatens to drag his kin with it, is feared, so too is this fact which is in contact with the altar of souls (nimara boli) and which reflects the face of the ancestors. It also represents Faro: the mask is sometimes provided with a long beard symbolic of his hair, and lightly plastered with a layer of black earth taken from the river bank and impregnated with his power; it is sometimes smeared with the blood of a young girl who has died in the course of the ceremonies, in commemoration of the virgins annually offered to Faro in olden times.

Copper arrows (kun bye) are inserted into the skull and charms (kun kanana) are attached to them with the purpose of attacking the undesirables (noninitiates, women, or children) who approach the dance site.

"The eyes of the mask are large, so that the Komo may see and unveil everything; the nostrils are well opened for he must sniff everything, smell the good and bad of things. The mouth is twisted for the Komo does not talk; he only whistles and sings. The ears are vast so that he may hear everything, even that /150/ which each one says secretly in his heart. The chin of the mask is square, a sign of purity, decision, and clairvoyance." During the ceremonies, he silently opens his mouth. It is said that due to the presence of the altar of souls, nimara boli, "happiness penetrates him" (1). By singing, he redistributes this felicity to the audience and this is why he repeats the verses.

1. Here dun, literally, penetration of happiness.

794 532 784 841 As a rule, women, griot and noninitiates are taboo to the mask. To each of the elements composing it also belongs a particular taboo. Thus, the head of the mask must never touch menstrual blood. Any infraction would bring about "a visible change to the face" and the altars contained in the sac carried by the dancer would be without strength. For this reason, no member must participate in the ceremonies if his wife is in a menstrual period.

794 292 The costume worn by the dancer is held up by a sort of carcass (bry) made of ngolobe (1) wood used because of its flexibility, and is

1. Combretum micranthum.

enveloped with a light blanket for protection. Inside the bry are suspended various flutes (komo fle) which are blackened by the blood of sacrifices offered to "improve their sound" and which will be used in the course of the ceremonies. Along with these flutes is a little bag filled with spare spider webs. Any individual who goes under the [834] bry to dance must abstain from sexual relations for a specified period of time prior to the ceremony.

The costume (nya) which covers the carcass is made with the clothing of individuals killed by the Komo (2). Contrary to the bry, which

2. When a guilty member or a non-initiate is "killed" by the Komo, his clothing is offered to it.

has no active role but serves only to isolate the dancer inside the mask, the religious role of the costume is very important. It represents the "body and the valor of the ancestors." It is not the object of blood sacrifices, but is covered by a powder made of the bones of individuals killed by the Komo to which has been added kola nut juice. The 794 cloth is dyed with black earth taken from the river bank in exchange 292 for a small offering of copper, gold, or cereals. Drawings called 532 komo mani (literally, little people of the Komo) are made on the cloth to represent Faro on the one hand, recognizable by his long black hair, and on the other the eight ancestors who received the word. All the first agricultural implements of the Bambara are drawn with red ochre. The feathers of black, white, and red egrets are then sewn on the nya to hide /151/ the black earth, which is the spirit's abode. Two days before everything is taken out, these feathers are the object of offerings of kola nut juice, millet mash, and the blood of fowls.

794 292 784 The costume, like the head of the mask, must be seen neither by women nor by noninitiates. "Its color would change and it would become dull, making a purification necessary."

794 532 The body of the mask has two arms into which the dancer introduces his own. The arms terminate in a hook, koli (3), which is

794 532 3. Koli means nail or spur in reference to a rooster and, by extension, hook.

impregnated with black earth from the river and made of copper, Faro's metal, soaked in the venom of a viper before the hook was formed. These hooks are also annually soaked in red venom mixed with pepper. All these preparations make them dangerous weapons used for different purposes during the ceremonies.

The right hook (kinin koli) is used to kill the guilty ones or the undesirables. A slight would brings about death which is then attributed to Faro. The left hook defends members of the society against the dangers which are present, even for them, in the actions and emanations of the right hook. It contains two shards of black pottery, Faro's taboo, which keep away and thus diminish the latter's power. During the dance the Komo, wishing to protect one of the members under its jurisdiction, waves the left arm over him to attenuate the strength of the right. During funerals a gesture of the left hook will indicate the deceased's membership in the society and will assure him protection in the hereafter.

[784 823] The taboo of the copper hooks is the same as Faro's concerning this metal. Just as no one would cross the Niger wearing an object or an ornament of copper, similarly no one would wear copper in attending the Komo ceremonies.

The wearing of the mask, which is much sought after by several initiates at each ceremony, is assigned to one of them by the chief. This role involves risks which are diminished by certain precautions such as abstention from sexual relations before the ceremony. On the day of the ceremony, the elders make the wearer drink millet beer until he is completely inebriated; then for a moment they apply to his chin and abdomen the nyama boli which he will carry in a bag during the ceremony. He also puts on a ritual headdress which sometimes has incorporated in it a particle of the one belonging to the famous Soma Moriba Sidibé. The mask is then adjusted on his head, the flute slipped between his teeth, while the chief assures him of his good faith and proves to him that he runs no danger.

/152/ D. Musical Instruments

794 534 The emergence of the Komo is accompanied by rhythms played on drums, dyiri kolo (literally, bone, wood), made of hides stretched

794 on half-gourds, and accompanied by flutes and bells. The musicians,
534 recruited from among the musical members of the society, are obliged to submit to certain precautions because of the proximity of the mask during the performance of the dances. In fact, if the mask casts a spell (korti), they may, unwittingly, breathe in the dangerous powder and it is wise to protect oneself by taking the antidote ahead of time.

794 The Komo's iron bell, kolõkolõ or grinda, is kept with certain
534 altars in the chief's residence; it is rung by a special bearer, grindavo
713 or nadara koloyo.
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A myth recalls the origin of this bell. "A small child, who went to play at the crossroads situated at the approaches to the village, heard one day a bell ring and invisible beings speak. Seized with fear, he returned home. When he was questioned by his parents, he refused to answer but with his finger pointed out to them the road which he took every day. The parents followed it and arrived at the crossroads where they found a copper bell. The spirit of the place, Soba, announced to them that he was making a gift of it so that they might call the spirits by ringing it and that the spirits would answer them (1). But he asked the father to give him in exchange the child

1. In olden times, "men spoke with their ancestors and with their gods."

who habitually came to the crossroads so that the child could continue to play with the spirit's children. When the father, in despair, told him he had not the courage to part with his son, the spirit advised him to consult Faro.

The man gathered the young girls of the village together and asked them to intercede for him with the spirit. Dressed in their most beautiful clothes and wearing their ornaments, they went off singing and threw cakes and couscous into the river (2). The elders

[796] 2. Each year the offering and the race are repeated by the young girls of Ségou who go to the river singing the nyari nyari to.

went down in turn and received Faro's consent. He demanded that

794 they keep the instrument for religious ceremonies. After declaring
534 that they would obey, the elders returned to the crossroads where
773 the Soba spirit gave them the bell and left in exchange the child whom
539 the spirit had called to him in their absence.

The object was then taken to the blacksmith who made one in the same shape, using wood or bone for the body, and stone for the clapper. After the invention of iron, they were forged according to the ancient model with the addition of small copper bells."

794 /153/ To ring the bell is "to make Faro hear the sound of copper,"
534 to call him, and flatter him at the same time. When the mask is brought out, the sound warns the noninitiates to avoid the procession. The flute or reed pipe of the Komo, wara da, "mouth of the one armed with claws," is made of a bamboo stem pierced by three holes. The middle one is open and the two others are obstructed by a cobweb. The instrument is held between the bearer's teeth and is tied by a string to the back of his neck or to his ears.

794 A myth tells the origin of Faro's flute, made according to the
534 same principle, but of a different shape.
773 A woman, called Koussouba Koulibali, was bathing one morning
539 when she saw Faro and the dodo fish sitting at the river bank. The fish was playing the flute and singing:

"I will whistle, I will whistle in my Faro's flute; he who will not hear me will die, he who will die will regret it" (1).

1. Na fye, na fye ne nka faro fle flye,
nyimi mame o na sa, nyimi sara o bone na.

The woman fled and told her husband, who was a diviner and chief of the Komo, about what had happened. The latter proceeded to the banks of the Niger and frightened away the fish who abandoned its instrument. The man seized it and went home, followed by the turbulent river water from which he managed to escape in his canoe. But his whole family perished in the flood.

In the morning, the man returned to the river bank and cried as he played the flute. He played for such a long time that Faro, taking pity on him, came out and said: "I have drowned the members of your family and flooded the village. I forgive you, however,

794 534 713 539 because of the offerings made by other men. Keep the flute and since you are Soma and chief of the Komo, let all the Komo flutes be blessed because of this one." By this he meant that the Komo flute, like the other ritual objects, would hereafter contain his strength, nyama. He added that, when men wished to call him or to talk to him, they would have to do it through the intermediary of this instrument.

794 534 Before each occasion when the mask is brought out, a sacrifice is performed upon the flutes "to improve their sound." Faro's flute is used in the rituals performed at the river bank, to pray to him or to thank him. To play the flute is equivalent to reciting his device; he is forced to hear. The Komo flute is used only during the masked ceremonies; it makes those who hear it say that the Komo is "a thing with a soft throat" (1).

1. Fẽ kã duma.

In former times the chief alone was allowed to play the flute, whatever its type; death was sanctioned for infraction of this rule. Ordinary flutes /154/ of a style different from those belonging to the cult are used by children.

E. Initiation to the Komo

794 852 Three days after the birth of a boy, his father presents him with the elements which he has contributed to the making of the Komo boli and recites the komo kumã: "You, Komo boli, these things are inside; society of the Komo, these things are inside; customs of the Komo, these things are inside; you are a child, you are going to approach the age of the elders; Komo boli, here is my child, watch over him" (2).

2. Komo boli la, nin waliw ba kono; komo dyẽ la, nin fẽw ba la; komo sira la, nin kunko ba kono; i ye demisẽ ye i bi ta makorobaya ye; komo boli nde fle, tyẽ do, i dyã to a la.

He then returns the child to its mother with these words: "The son has been introduced to the secret of masculinity; he has received

794 852 the Komo's blessings, the Komo's blessing is with him; let him join the men, let his light be with us" (1). The child is then presented in

1. De dyira la tye gundo la; ani komo ye dukaw mine nuofe, komo ka barka bi a fe; ka fara tyew ka, ka yele ke an ta ye.

the same way to its grandmother.

794 These acts anticipate the initiation which later will make the newborn an adolescent member of the Komo society.

794 561 [564] In each village this society is composed of all initiated men, divided into age grades, which are themselves composed, theoretically, of the men circumcised in the same year. Only the griot are not admitted. It is permissible for an individual who has not been initiated immediately after his circumcision to be admitted later if the society agrees. He will belong, regardless of his age, to the age grade with which he will have been initiated.

One age grade has precedence over the other which follows. This hierarchical order is followed strictly in daily life as well as during councils and ceremonies. To break these rules of seniority would mean to disturb the order even in the hereafter, since the Komo gathers together the sum total of both living and dead members.

794 [735] The recruitment of members varies from one region to another because of the expenses involved in the admission ceremony and in participation in the ritual. Some villagers refrain from joining because of poverty, and it also happens that some conversions to Islam are brought about by this fact.

/155/ The initiation is performed at night. The kotigi (2) presents

2. See p. 156.

to the future members, one by one, the ancestors' tools. He explains to them their origin, their history, their role, and their spiritual value. He teaches them the respect they owe the ancestors for their courage, their labors, and the technological inventions of which they were either initiators or guardians. The mask is removed from its shelter and dressed by a member; in front of the children the man who wears it unmasks himself and reveals to them the meaning of the different parts of the costume.

794 The candidates next swear an oath the text of which is recited by the chief:

"If I reveal (the secrets of) the boli, may it kill me; if I disclose the institutions, may they kill me; until my death, if I speak, may my father die, may my mother die, may the boli break my heart" (1).

1. Ni nye korobo, boli ka fa, ni nye korobo, dyow ka fa, fo kata n sa ni nya fo n fa ka sa m ba ka sa, boli dyugu ka sõ ta.

Each in his turn, the children next lick the head and the hooks of the mask three times, thus assuring it their allegiance: "Until my death, I shall not reveal the koli. Faro has not been revealed! Let the koli not be revealed!" (1)

1. Fo ka ta n sa nte korobo koli, faro ma korobo, koli kana korobo.

[782] After the altars, including the pembele, have been presented to them, the postulants drink the blood of a goat offered in sacrifice; thus they assimilate the forces of the Komo and by this communion consecrate their oath.

Finally, the mechanism of the society in all its details is explained to them: the necessity of hierarchy in age grades, of respect for taboos, and of the secrecy in which all that concerns the organization must be held. A moral lesson is also taught them; in particular they [867] are advised to set themselves a line of conduct in private life as well as in public life, to be righteous, to avoid duplicity and bad faith, flãvlãña (literally, double action), never to serve two masters, and not to entertain conflicting desires among themselves.

794 As an illustration, the adventures of the first members who broke these laws are told.
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539 One of Makanta Djigui's companions, Garou Keita, was afflicted with this serious fault. He had become friendly with Moridje Sidibé, son of the famous Soma Moriba Sidibé, who had the same character. At this period three great Komo were already functioning in the region: that of Koulikouro called selo (literally, grave); that of Nyamina called dyibi (literally, dark); and that of Kankan.

Garou went to one of the ceremonies of the Komo of Kankan /156/ and by telling lies, incited the members to revolt against the local

chiefs, which they did. They interrupted the dances and refused to recognize the Komo which was dissolved, leaving the chief alone. But Garou, who had lied, died shortly after that.

The chief of Kankan carried away the altars and put them under the protection of the Komo chief of Koulikoro, and the members participated in the ceremonies of this locality. Moridje went to Nyamina and, in the same way as Garou, incited the members to engage in a kind of rivalry with the Komo of Koulikoro. In the course of a ceremony celebrated in this latter village, he called forth the Komo of Nyamina, using the authority attached to his father's name, and offerred a male goat to both groups. The two chiefs refused, arguing with reason that one victim could not satisfy two Komo. Moridje paid no attention and brought the two maskers face to face with the goat between them. A fight took place with the animal as a pawn, each masker using his magical powers to win it, and the members gathered behind their respective masks shouting: "the goat is ours." Later, the mask wearer also died prematurely.

To avoid the possibility that members will give their allegiance to two Komo, they are made to lick the mask once again, while the following prayer is recited: "If you lick the mask, may you not make the flãvlãña, may you not perpetrate a betrayal" (1). If, after swear-

1. Nye komo kun no, i kana seka flãvlãña kẹ, nye komo kun no, i kana seka dyãfa kẹ.

ing this oath, the party betrays it, he becomes "a rotten person" (matolilo) and loses the esteem and confidence of his companions.

As the young men grow with years and increase in knowledge, the instruction they are given is increasingly comprehensive. The head of the Komo, accompanied by men of his age grade, takes the postulant into the bush and questions him about his intentions and aims. Before indicating to him the group to which he is to be attached and introducing its members to him, he teaches him by drawing on the ground the combination of signs representing the arrangement in the universe of the Komo society, a combination which is usually reproduced before each ceremony and which permits the participants to recognize their place (see Fig. 12).

This drawing, called wolo ti, "sign of the generation," is composed of two long lines cutting each other at right angles and oriented

794 869 532

according to the cardinal points. The point of juncture is placed in the center of a square called bara kene, "rhythm of space," the internal angles of which are armed with hooks. The two crossed lines are /157/ the symbol of the multiplication and extension of beings and things in the universe which is represented by the central square. The four angle hooks express the creation rotating upon itself (1). It is therefore,

1. See p. 20. We have here a special representation of the swastika whose branches are turned toward the center.

a schematic representation of the order and movement of the universe.

Along the extension of the diagonal lines outside the central square are drawn five signs which are each the symbol of a category of initiates or of a ritual object; these signs also indicate the place of the participants during the ceremonies.

On the eastern and western branches are placed the signs of the older initiates:

1. dyɛ, "union." Sign of the Komo Society in its entirety, the body of its members.

2. doniya, "knowledge." The point of the angle is "the point of knowledge" and its opening "the collective voice of the society." We are dealing here with the science which the initiates possess.

3. bako, "link." This closed sign expresses the ties which bind the initiates one to another and to the Komo, as well as the group spirit of which they must give proof.

4. sõni, "good will, consent." The point of departure of the stroke from the line indicates that the initiate is free to enter the society, to climb the steps of the successive grades indicated by the broken line, but not to leave it, and that he must have the will to follow the rules of the organization.

5. tyɛ̃, "truth." The members must be sincere. The two symmetrical hooks indicate that one must begin with truth and end with it.

6. tyɛ̃ ɲere, "evidence of truth." This drawing, testimony to the preceding, is sometimes attributed to strangers who come to attend the ceremony and recognize the conventional signs (2).

2. See p. 211.

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7. bẽni so, "house of agreement." Evidence of the sign 1, it represents a sickle, symbol of the house and of the union of the members. In serious cases, to stop a quarrel or to settle a difference, the Komo chief presents an ancient sickle and says: "It is the proof of the agreement, it is the evidence of the union" (1).

1. Beni so yeta do, dye šere do.

8. ǰigi so, "house of support." The dot symbolizes the komo so and the whole recalls the support which the chief offers the members. Orphans sit in the spot where this sign is drawn.

/158/ 9. so ba, "big house." The drawing represents "the egg of the world" and marks the spot where the oldest geomancer in the village stands alone.

10. komba, "big door." Sign and place of the person who performs the sacrifice, for the sacrifice "opens the doors" and puts man into contact with the invisible.

On the northern branch are placed the signs which concern the young initiates.

11. timidẽ, "circumcised." This refers to those circumcised in the next to the last age grade. The sign is that of the completed person (2).

2. See G. Dieterlen, "Les signes des Kéita du Mandé /Signs of the Kéita among the Mande/," l'Homme. Cahiers d'ethnologie, de géographie, de linguistique (in press).

12. timidẽ kle, "circumcised of the last age grade." The drawing shows the incomplete person.

13. tyi dẽ, "son of work." These are the sons of the kworo duga (3). The sign, drawn inverse to that of the person, expresses the /159/

3. See p. 220.

necessary disturbances and the pleasantries brought by these dignitaries to the Kworè and Komo ceremonies.

794
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14. soni dẽ, "son of the sacrifice." Drawn on the place for the sacrificer's son, the sign includes a horizontal line representing the knife, for the son may be called upon to replace his father in performing his duty during the ceremonies.

15. yeleka tigela, "the laughing man who cuts." This is the individual in charge of proclaiming the good or bad position of the victims which have been sacrificed.

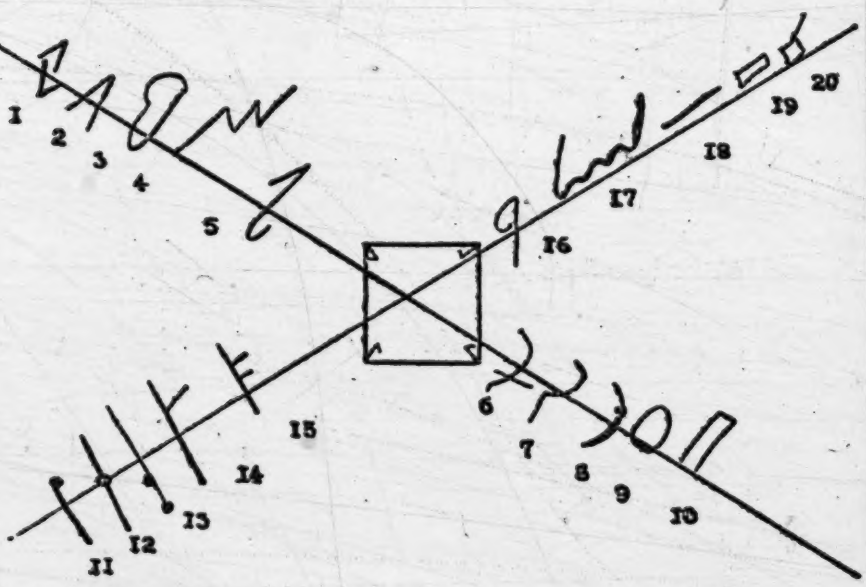

Fig. 12 — Drawing made on the ground by the chief of the Komo to mark, by their signs, the places of the participants during the ceremonies. This drawing, observed in the village of Dougoutiguibougou, is complete. When the branches forming an x are missing, the central square is always represented. (Drawing by an informant)

On the southern branch are placed the signs representing the blacksmiths; they relate to the institution of circumcision and to the functioning of the Komo of which these artisans are the dignitaries.

16. bõĩema, "honored person." Place of the aged blacksmiths.

17. wara da dyuru, "string from the mouth of the man armed with hooks." This is the small string of the flute, called "voice" of the Komo.

18. wara da, "mouth of the man armed with hooks." The flute of the Komo.

794 869 532 19. pembele. This sign represents both the society's pembele and the board of the same name used for circumcision.

20. gosilãnde. The sign designates the primitive club and the small mallet used in circumcising.

The ensemble of these figures, representing a summary of the universe in its arrangement and its movement, forms the scene upon which the actors in the ceremony take their places. The latter are in a way the living embodiment of these drawings as well as the movements which change the order of presentation and must be executed with special precautions. In effect, any change made in the arrangement of the actors in the scene is felt to have repercussions in the universal organization. This is why the movements of each one give rise to rituals of forgiveness and purification concerning the sign corresponding to him (1).

1. See below.

F. Ceremonies of the Komo

794 796 The ceremonies in which the mask participates take place several times a year according to the decision of the members. Their purpose is to discuss the interests of the society, to make joint decisions assuring the prosperity of its members, to promote harvesting, and to commemorate the organization of the Komo.

Three principal ceremonies are celebrated: the first, called /160/ "anniversary of the Komo" (komo sanyelema), at the end of the dry season; the second after the harvest, for offering of the first produce, as the mask is never taken into the fields at the time of cultivation; the third during the cold season at the time of circumcision. They involve sacrifices offered in the cemetery in honor of the dead as well as divining rites. Occasional ceremonies may also take place inbetween upon the membership's decision; the mask is taken out for purifications. The neighboring societies are generally invited to [574] attend the reunions and the drinking which follow (2).

2. The important Komo chiefs are thus consulted by strangers in the village, who sometimes travel considerable distances.

194 196 The ceremony begins with a council meeting which is attended by all the members and which takes place in an enclosure, kara so. Early in the morning, the Komo chief, aided by two men of his age grade, draws upon the ground the figures which indicate the places of the participants and of the material objects (1).

1. See Fig. 12.

When the members arrive, they immediately place themselves, without risking disorder, near the sign proper to the group to which they belong. Each one, in passing, greets the person who will perform the sacrifice. The inhabitants of the neighboring villages are received by a member in a spot somewhat removed. They state the group to which they belong or draw their sign on the ground without saying a word. The chief acclaims their arrival with these words: "The strangers have come; the strangers, sons of the Komo have come; their place is in their hand; let tolerance be granted them" (2). The

2. Dnow nana, komo dɛ̃ dnow nana,
u siki yoro be u bolo, yafa ka kɛ u ma.

council meeting is then opened.

The chief sits down in the central square, facing the west, places the boli to his right, listens to the propositions of the members, all of whom similarly face west. If he rises, all conversation ceases; it resumes only when he is again seated. If a member wishes to move during the meeting, he must ask the permission of the chief of the Komo. The latter goes to place his hand near the sign as an excuse for the man. When the member returns, the chief of his group takes a little water with which to pour over the drawing as a purification (3).

3. The temporary absence of a member is called: wuli ka bo komo ko la, "to rise and leave the affair of the Komo" and the return do dye ba la komo jine sabu la, "to enter into the great union of the spirit of the Komo."

When all questions concerning the society or the village have been examined and discussed, and when the decisions have been reached, everyone stands up; the drawings on the ground are erased with water.

794 The rituals in which the mask participates generally /161/ take
796 place the following night in a thicket called komo tu, "bushy one of
201 the Komo," situated in the bush near the village.

As soon as they hear the mask whistling, the members approach according to their age grades, the older ones first. In principle, only those under the jurisdiction of the functioning Komo and their guests are present. However, any initiated stranger who wishes to attend the dances makes his status known by means of the following signs:

1. Shouting "hé" or "ho," he presents his right hand to the mask with all the fingers folded except the index and the little finger which point towards it. The index, in this case, represents the circumcised man, member of the Komo society, in sum, the petitioner. The little finger, which is smaller, expresses this man's submission to the Komo and the fact that he is and will always remain its inferior.

2. He puts a twig of straw in his mouth; the light colored straw signifies that his heart is pure, that he has no evil intention. The mouth, closed over the straw, shows that the man, "understanding the word of the Komo," has no need to speak of it.

3. On his arrival, he says: ani bara (literally, I am with the bara). The masker, hearing these words, crouches and then straightens up suddenly before the newcomer as though to frighten him. The latter then says: "I am a new child of the society" (1). When he is accepted,

1. Ne ye timidɛ̃ kura ye.

the masker resumes the dance and the ceremony continues.

794 The rhythms of the Komo bear the general name of komo bara or
796 komo foli dunu (literally, rhythm of the Komo drums) (2). They are
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2. The word bara is reserved for the rhythms of the masked Komo dances. The rhythms of the profane dances of the elders are called mabere fo, those of the young men, bɔ̃dyala, those of the girls, kofili.

numerous, adapted to the rituals they accompany, each endowed with a separate namè. The Bambara classify them into three categories: the rapid, violent, and difficult rhythms performed against the non-initiates; the soft rhythms for circumcision; the sad rhythms for funerals.

194 196 533 During the masked dances, once the drummers have begun the rhythm of the Komo, they must neither slow down nor cease their playing; otherwise the masker will rush at the player and threaten him with his left hook. In this case, the musician changes the rhythm in order to soothe the masker and sings: "You, old men, you are with the bara; listen, this bara is not empty." (1).

1. Aw ni bara makorabaw; klo madyo,
nin bara te bara lakulo ye.

194 196 198 /162/ The masker participates in the ceremony not only by dancing and by uttering cries, whose pitch and intensity vary according to the action which he is preparing or performing.

A guttural and very muffled cry (buâ, buâ, buâ) called komo suruku (literally, hyena of the Komo) is used to frighten the participants.

A shrill and short cry (pyę, pyę, pyę) called kono fari kasi (literally, cry of the bad bird) is frequently used to animate the dance and amuse the spectators.

A long and softer cry (ô-ô, ô, ô, the last three ô's being very close together) called morokorobaw kasi (literally, cry of the ancestors) greets the chief and his age grade.

194 196 During the mask dance, the Komo's griot encourages it by reciting the devices which exalt its power, authority, and judicial powers:

"You, Komo, you griot of the Komo, you, ringer of the bell, from whom do you come? You come from Makanta Djigui. You, bad Komo, from whom do you come? You come from Soma Moriba. To whom did this one give it? He gave it to the sons of the blacksmiths. Who are the owners of the Komo? Makanta Djigui, Soma Moriba, the sons of the blacksmiths. These have not known shame; you must not be ashamed. These have not received humiliations; you must not be humiliated.

"You, little living Komo, enemy of non-members, friend of members, take your enemy's heart, take his liver. I follow behind you and not before you. Ah! Komo; you, killer of the fat dead ones, shroud of those living, act upon him who provokes you as you do upon him who does not provoke you" (2).

2. E komo, e dyeli, e ndara kolo fo,
e bwora dyeni ma, e bwora makanta

794 796 jigi la, e komo fare ma e bwora dyeni ma, e bwora soma moriba, o ya di dyeni ma, oy a di numu dew ma dyenuye komo tigiw ye, makanta jigi, soma moriba, numu dew: oluw ma malo, aw kana malo, oluw ma lebu, aw kana lebu.

E komo ni nyenama biribalyuw dyugu, birilew nyima i dyugu son ta i la ka bye ta mbi ko nti nye.

E komo, i su klo la faba, nyenemaw kasange, minya kila a ko la, mi ma kila a ko la.

When the drums beat and the dances are animated, and when the masker cries, it is said that "the bara of the komo is hot" (komo bara wusule do). The ceremony is in full swing.

Diverse incidents may occur in the course of the masked dances which give rise to interpretations and interventions by the members.

794 796 787 When one of the arrows attached to the mask trembles, it indicates the presence of a sorcerer in the assembly. The elders remove the arrow and immediately order /163/ the ceremony to stop. After the drums have been silenced, they request the culprit to present himself, which he immediately does. These words are spoken to him: "Your arrow attacks you" (1). He then offers a ram and beer in sacrifice,

1. Komo bye bila.

while the arrow is replaced and the dances resume. If an arrow falls in the course of the dance it indicates the presence of a sorcerer in the village.

794 796 If a part of the costume falls off, it is picked up by three members and kept to be burned with the refuse that is later swept up (2).

2. See p. 259.

794 796 688 If one of the participants has broken the taboo and revealed the secrets of the Komo during the past year, the masker whistles, asks the drummers to stop playing, and says: "Here is a grasshopper for me." These words express the contempt in which he holds the culprit. Next he adds: "There is the smell of a corpse here" (3).

794 3. Su kasa be.

796 The man lowers his head and all move away from him. The masker
688 wounds him with the right hook. He is banished from the circle of
766 dancers and probably will die several days later. His funeral rites are not solemnized. The corpse is tied by the feet and removed from his home through a hole made in the wall to prevent his evil nyama from returning to the family. The body is beaten with switches so that the soul may leave the village forever, and is thrown into the common grave or placed in the cleft of a tree, which is then closed up with thorny bushes. In this case it is often devoured by the hyenas. The clothing which belonged to him is hung on the hook placed on the outside wall of the sanctuary. No one has the right to weep for his death and no one ever mentions him again. To do so would be an offense to the Komo.

794 It may also happen that the emergence of the Komo occurs without
796 the village being warned. In this case, if a young girl imprudently
688 approaches the place where the dance is being held, the masker may
782 kill her with one blow of its hook directly upon her head. A little of her blood is then placed as an offering on the nya and her jewelry thrown into the river where her soul goes to replace the virgin who, in former times, was annually offered to Faro.

G. Effects of Broken Taboos

794 The breaking of the taboos attached to the altars or to the mask
783 reacts upon each of the parts affected as it does upon the whole and brings about a diminishing of the Komo's power, which is abandoned by Faro and the ancestors. A purification may be performed /164/ in certain cases. The error is then corrected and the spiritual forces reenter the altars.

If a woman or a noninitiate catches a glimpse of the nya, the komo tigi and his age grade go down to the river bank and, to the sound of drums, present the culprit's apologies to the spirit:

"I have not come for someone else, I have come for myself, I have come to reestablish the race of our fathers" (1).

1. Ne mana ma nyini; ne mana nyere nyini,
ne ma na m fa sia tuku ko la.

194 183 The victim offered by the responsible party then has its throat cut, its body is thrown into the water, and the members take some black earth to smear again on the regenerated nya.

If the chief does not observe the chastity imposed upon him before every sacrifice, he must advise the elders of his age grade and purify the altars by sacrificing two roosters or a goat.

It would seem that the taboo of the nimara boli may not be broken without danger, and that in this case the fault is almost irreparable. The Komo is affected not only in one of its parts, but in its entirety, and a general reordering becomes necessary for the society. The chief and the elders carry away the principal altars to their place of origin, that is to say to the village where they were consecrated through contact with those of the local Komo (1). The owner of this latter Komo

1. See p. 190.

keeps the tainted objects for seven days. After this delay, the petitioners return, bringing victims which are sacrificed upon the altars now placed in contact with those from which they originated (2). The

2. The nimara boli is "rubbed" on the nimara boli of the tro ba, the nyɔ̃ boli on the nyɔ̃ boli of the same, etc.

meat is eaten by the chief who is being consulted, and by him alone. The petitioners must then return home with their sack without speaking a word to anyone during the trip.

This ceremony, which is a second consecration, may under no circumstances be repeated. If the taboo is broken once more after a first fault and a first reordering, the Komo is considered to be entirely destroyed and the village is sometimes abandoned by the inhabitants who have "lost their soul" and who fear the wrath of Faro; they disperse, unhappy and powerless. Some conversions to Islam or to Christianity may have had no other motivation.

H. Role of the Komo

194 182 "The Komo is a society which unites the highest divine power, men, animals, and plants until the /165/ end of the world. It is the

194 keeper of souls. When there is no longer life on earth, when there
182 are neither men, nor animals, nor plants, the Komo will awaken the souls of the dead which have been in its keeping for eternity."

As a repository of the spiritual forces of its members, the Komo is involved in most of their activities and participates in daily life. Birth, circumcision, marriage, burial, and the cult of the ancestors are all characterized by its direct or indirect intervention. It plays a remarkable role in agricultural life (rain, agrarian rites, household and communal excrement) as well as in the functioning of handicraft technologies. Collective issues (war, political conflict) and economic questions are submitted to its decision. In fact, the members' belongings (grain, cowries) are kept in granaries for which the chief is responsible and from which he agrees to make interest loans to needy members. The chief of the Komo, who is a diviner, is consulted directly by petitioners. Assisted by the elders of his age grade, he is also responsible for dispensing justice (1). Thus the name of an un-

1. The judicial role has been notably pointed out by L. Tauxier in La Religion bambara, p. 300.

worthy member is pronounced above the pembele which is immediately removed. This gesture deprives the culprit of the protection of Pemba and abandons him to misery and shame.

On the other hand, the actual functioning of the society develops social life. The initiates of neighboring villages are invited when the mask is brought out and a number of marriage negotiations are concluded during the drinking parties which follow the ceremonies. These also favor cultural exchanges. It is during publicly held conversations that teaching is furthered, for the rituals are commented upon and explained, and the myths and their metaphysical foundations are presented in detail. The most knowledgeable informants all speak of nights spent in listening to the competent elders around the jars of millet beer.

The Komo is the repository of traditional beliefs and rules of solidarity between members. It diffuses a thorough knowledge of civic and moral instructions, the rights and duties of the members, the taboos and sanctions which affect those who break taboos. Its juridical role makes it a disciplinary agent: it is a powerful support of the Bambara social organization.

/166/ The Kworę

794 821 The Kworè society, kworę dye (literally, reunion of the Kworè) consists of individuals around the altars (kworę boli) on which rites are performed concerning the skies, space, the cardinal points, the atmospheric manifestations of Faro, and particularly rain. Kworè literally means "dried up pond."

The rituals are intended for the Kworè spirits who depend upon Faro and who live in the kaba fĩn (third sky). They are in charge of watching over the rains sent from the wolofla kaba (seventh sky), which cross the other skies and "the void" before reaching the earth. The spirits struggle in the skies and in space against the mahalakillen of the koblenkaba (fifth sky) who try to stop the water. Lightning, thunder, and thunderbolt are the effects of these struggles.

794 778 The principal ceremonies take place around a tree, called kworę tigi, which is situated to the east of the village and is the usual habitation of the spirits when they descend to receive men's offerings. The altars are placed in a hut built in the bush; other samples of these are kept in the chief's residence. A large stone, kworę fara, located near the village and placed in the ground above some symbolic objects, also receives offerings. The Kworè society is the owner of a communally cultivated field, in which small millet, safiõ, is exclusively sown and the harvest of which is kept for the needs of the cult.

A chief, the kworę tigi, is entrusted with the care of the altars and performance of the ritual.

A. The Altars

The altars of the kworę are placed in a sanctuary called buku sãmpere ni (literally, little hut of thunder) and situated at a certain distance from the village because of the dangers from lightning. The door is low and very narrow so that the forces held within may not escape.

The altars are composed of the following objects:

1. A large sac of the skin of a male goat, kworę boli sãmpere, open at its upper extremity and suspended by a boa skin (miñã) which symbolizes lightning. This sac, which has three compartments, contains copper, water from the Niger, rain water, and the "thunder stones" of the society. The "thunder stones," sãmpereni or sãmpere

dyele, play an essential role /167/ in the rain cult among the Bambara as among the other blacks of the Sudan. They supposedly fall from the sky with lightning bolts (1).

1. They are picked up at the spot where they fall and are the object of an important trade.

At the time when a Kworé society is being founded, the chief, generally accompanied by the komotigi, visits villages where lightning has struck in order to buy stones and to choose them with a knowledge of the case. Each member contributes to the purchase of one stone.

2. Another sac also made of the skin of a male goat, called nõ boli (boli of millet), is suspended from the roof by a serpent skin. This altar is dependent upon the nõ boli of the Komo, which presides over germination. It contains small millet from the fields of the Kworé and some of the small millet from the nõ boli of the Komo.

3. A sac containing water from the last rain, called ngule sãndyi.

4. A sac made of the bladder of an ox, jettemine boli, makes it possible to see the water level from the outside. After each rainfall the level is checked by the chief and the water is poured into the ngule sãndyi where it is kept throughout the year.

5. A sac containing thunder stones intended for sale:
   (a) To be suspended from roof to counteract lightning.
   (b) To attract lightning; in this case the stone is placed under a shelter in the bush.
   (c) To make a new kworé boli.

This sac is the object of libations consisting of rain water drawn from the ngule sãndyi, to which has been added a pulverized thunder stone.

6. An axe called sãmpere dyele koro (literally, old thunder axe) of an ancient shape, made of a hewn stone set in a wooden handle. Considered as the "mother of the thunder stones," it is not removed from the altar until the very last when the rites for rain have failed.

Pieces of mirror brought by members of the society are set into the wall; the reflections from these mirrors also are supposed to affect rainfall.

794 778 B. In the chief's residence, there are replicas of the axe and the altars. According to the needs, they are transported to the shore of the Niger, into the fields, or to the public square during the ceremonies. The originals, on the other hand, remain sheltered from the looks of outsiders and risks of impurity. Moreover, the chief owns a special altar, the kworę ni, "soul of the kworę," /168/ which contains the spiritual principles of the members who do not belong to the Komo society. The kworę ni is placed upon the chest of a dying man and receives his soul at the moment of death as does the nimara boli of the Komo (1). It is regularly saturated with rainwater.

C. The stone of the kworę, of which the lower part is crudely carved into seven teeth called kworę fara ni, is stuck into the ground after the following objects have been buried in this site. (See Fig. 13)

1. Three thunder stones called: fara ba, "big stone"; /169/ fara bye, "stone point"; fara joli, "blood of stone." These recall the presence of Faro's power, rain, under the altar. When placing them, the following words are repeated seven times: "Help us" (1)!

1. A ka demme.

2. Three whips, the male number, testimony to the course of men who withstand the pain of the strokes without complaining. When they are buried the following words are spoken: "Let us be courageous" (2).

2. A ka farina.

3. A kongobwona axe (see p. 160) which recalls the ancestors' victory over famine; it announces harvests and future wealth.

Drawings are made on the stone during the annual ceremony. In the center, a black dot called faro dẽzo, "womb of Faro," represents the spirit. It is framed by two series of three whips, each "to defend him," as well as by the first three of the eight ancestors (one of which was Koumabana) and by seven figures representing the members.

[184] Woman is the taboo of the Kworè. Only males may approach the sanctuary and the altars. Any circumcised male desiring to participate 794 in the ceremonies must be initiated. The postulants are brought 785 together by the chief under the Kworè tree, at the foot of which a fire is lit; each carries a twig of fiuãna wood. They suffer

194 785 uncomplainingly the burns inflicted upon them with a torch and they whip themselves vigorously. The chief next teaches them the role of the Kworè spirits, the rituals celebrating them, and the symbolic value of the objects of the cult.

194 522 Some of the members are designated to take the role of kworę duga during the ceremonies. Masked and waving freshly cut branches in each hand, they mount a wooden horse, the kworęduga so (1). Thus

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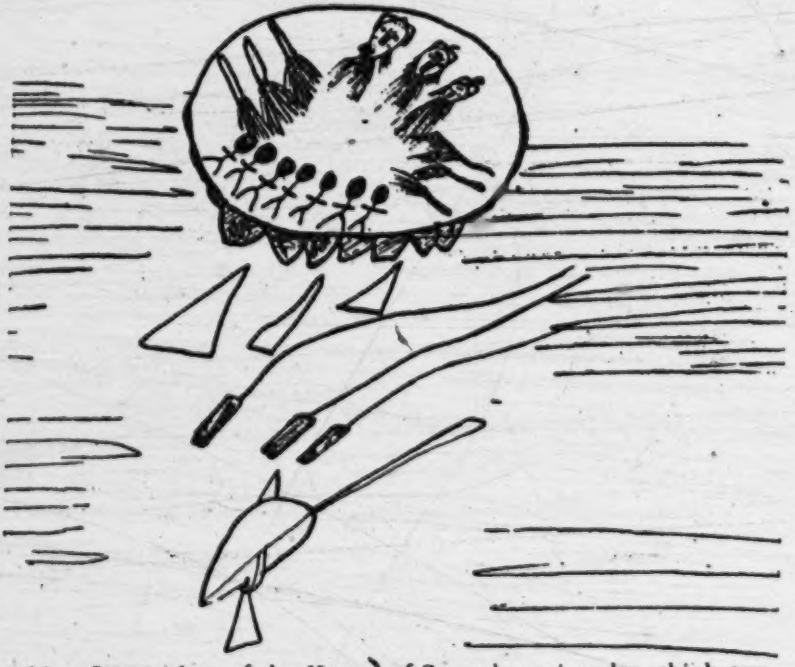

Fig. 13 —Stone altar of the Kworè of Banankoroni under which are buried three neolithic axes, three whips, the ritual iron axe, kongobwona. The drawing, made in the course of the annual ceremony, represents the first three of the eight ancestors who received the word, the members of the society, and the Kworè whips; the black spot is the "womb of Faro." (Drawing by an informant)

1. The kworę duga (literally, vulture of the Kworè), also called togoro koya, "jesters," are as their name indicates, jesters who have the right to joke about

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the most sacred things; their social position is comparable to that of the griot. In former times they were the first to sacrifice to the boli.

equipped, they represent the spirits of the kworę, mounted on their winged horses to attack the sky. One of them wears a mask, the kworę ku, to represent the ancestor of the group (1).

1. The materials, wooden horses, and masks are blackened by fire and saturated with karite oil.

794 Close bonds unite the Komo and the Kworè. Their cults complement each other and an individual wealthy enough to meet the necessary expenses may belong to the two societies. In fact, one of the Komo's roles is to watch /170/ over the progress of the cultivations: its altars watch over the soul and the vital force of the crop seeds. The harvest, however, depends on rain and thus comes under the jurisdiction of the altars of the Kworè. The complementary activity of the two societies is certainly felt by the users who declare that "the ñõ boli of the Komo and the Kworè are united in action."

Some authors have raised the question of the Kworè's greater antiquity, when compared to that of the Komo, on the basis of the "Priapic" aspect of the former's ceremonies (2). Since the real purposes

2. See L. Tauxier. La Religion bambara, p. 311.

of the institution have almost completely escaped these observers, it was not possible for them to penetrate the meaning of these rituals. It is at the foot of the tree of the Kworè that men call upon the skies where Faro reigns; they pray to the koblenkaba in case of war, the sunãnkaba in case of epidemics, etc. The annual ceremony is a representation of the action of the invisible powers to obtain the rain necessary to men. The burns and the blows which the members inflict upon themselves, as well as the galloping of the kworęduga, symbolize the celestial struggles of the spirits among the unleashed elements.

The Ceble or Ndomo

•794 Like their circumcised and adult elders, all the uncircumcised and nonexcised members of a village form a society, called ceble (literally, red man) or ndomo (literally, gathering), whose members are called ndomo dew, sons of the ndomo, or also ndomo ngow. The society of the ndomo is older than that of the Komo (1). Formerly it brought

1. It is said: ndomo ka koro komo ye, "the ndomo is older than the komo." Certain aspects of the ndomo have been described by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné, p. 15, and L. Tauxier, La Religion bambara, p. 380 ff.

together a great number of adolescents since circumcision was performed much later. Nowadays, since children are operated upon very young, its importance has diminished, but as it contains the power of the uncircumcised it still plays an important role which is expressed even in its name. Red is a symbol of power and energy; it is also the [822] sign of the sacrifice.

The ndomo is directed by a chief assisted by a person who performs the sacrifices, murukalatigi (literally, master of the knife handle) and by an organizer of ceremonies, the dyolokotigi (literally, master of the chain).

It is in the course of agricultural work communally performed that the /171/ most energetic member is name chief; he is the one who has best and most rapidly fulfilled his task and who has, in addition, caused the adversaries who have been presented to touch the ground three times. The chief, who is responsible for the altars of the ndomo, sees to the instruction of the initiates, regulates their competitions, nominates the bearer of the mask and the one who is charged with the maintenance of ritual objects. Finally, he officiates during the collective ceremonies. The murukalatigi cuts the throats of the victims; he cuts out and makes the masks and other ritual objects. The dyolokotigi directs the ceremonies and makes decisions about the members' advancement.

The hierarchy is composed of five grades corresponding to the five fundamental altars. Each grade is passed annually after special

instruction and initiation. Five years are thus necessary to reach the highest rank. Each promotion is paid for by the individual providing two roosters whose throats are cut upon the altars at the end of the annual ceremony which takes place in the bush under a tree called the kalabana, following communally performed labor. After meal, a fight called bari, organized under the direction of the chiefs, puts the young boys in opposite groups and gives them the opportunity to show their courage and their initiative.

The members' activity consists of collective work at the time of the cultivation. The millet and the gifts in kind received in payment for the work are owned communally.

A. Material Objects of the Cult.

The society is the owner of ritual objects such as a mask and whips which are usually placed in a hut, ndomo buku, at some distance from the village.

The objects, numbering five, are rudimentary musical instruments. The wara, the clawed one, or diara, the lion, is a wooden bull-roarer approximately 35 centimeters in length, which is manipulated by means of a string a meter long. Sometimes the object is of iron and of smaller dimensions. The tori, toad, is a small box which gives off a nasal sound when it is scratched. The kono, bird, is made of two pieces of gourd bound together by spider webs. The wulu, dog, is a small calabash of about 10 centimeters in diameter, punctured by four holes. A string, threaded through its neck, allows it to be rotated like a rhombos. The jineble (literally, red spirit) is a buffalo horn pierced by three holes, /172/ obstructed by spider webs, into which one blows and which produce a loud, flute-like sound. One society usually owns several specimens of each of these instruments.

The mask, said to be the most ancient object, is of sculptured wood representing a human face crowned by several vertical, rather long horns (1). The whole is completely decorated with cowrie shells and

1. The masks most often carry eight horns, but this rule is not always respected.

red kise (2), grains which represent the blood from the offerings. The

2. Linociera sudarica.

794 778 532 high forehead, black and always smeared with karite butter, confers upon the face a beneficial power. The whole mask is regularly rubbed with ground charcoal powder and with the juice of the kola nut.

794 778 The whips of the mask (ndomo busa) are made of ñuana branches famous for their suppleness. They are made at the time of the annual ceremony and only renewed the following year. At the time of their manufacture, they are soaked in water, which the members of the society then drink "in order not to have to suffer from the blows which they will receive."

[824] Each member also possesses a long whip made of the branches of a bush, the ngere ni, (1) which is also called "tree of Faro" for it

1. Hibiscus pandoriformia.

grows in water, and which contains part of the beneficial power of the spirit. The whip is used to try out the children's courage. The one who cries or complains will carry this handicap with him through life; even after his circumcision he will be referred to as a coward.

B. Initiation

794 526 Each new grade is acquired in the course of the annual ceremony which takes place after the harvest. An elder entrusted with the sacrifices cuts the throats of the roosters offered by the postulants over the tree of the ndomo (Pl. V, a) and over the ritual objects placed at his feet, and then pours boiled millet as an offering. During this time the young people plow the ground where the contest, bari (2), is to take place; this fight will pit them against each other

2. To make oneself fall, the joust.

and give them the opportunity to show their courage and competitive spirit.

The chief designates the fighters two by two who are watched over /173/ by the dyolokotigi. In the contest, during which any use of legs or feet disqualifies the fighter, the one who makes his adversary fall three consecutive times is chosen to be initiated into a higher grade on the following night. After this contest, the losers must bring two additional roosters if they also wish to be initiated. Then a meal eaten in common brings together the members of the society and the postulants.

794 On the following night, the future initiates are led into the bush to a place called biri yoro (literally, place of initiation), where they sit down upon the ground, their heads covered with a piece of cloth.

At a sign from the dyolokotigi, a member causes the ritual instruments to roar or sing in succession; then he hides them and the postulants must find them. As they are not able to do so, a series of hazings are inflicted upon them (1) after which they are shown the

1. These hazings are often severe; fun is made of the ignorance and fears of the postulant.

instruments and each in turn made to repeat the solemn oath:

"If you have heard the dyara of the uncircumcised, that is it. Chisel a piece of wood, make a hole, put a string through, turn it, it is that which is the word of the ndomo dyara. If you reveal it, may it take your heart, may it take your liver, may it kill you" (2).

2. Ni ye me bilakorow ka ndomo dyara, nin do ka djiri dese, ka wo bo o la, ka dyuru ndo o la, o bi fyeku, o de bi ndomo dyara ka fo, ni ya korobo, a ki sõ ta, a ki biñe ta, a ki fa.

Next, they are made to lick three times the object which is then entrusted to them so that they may learn to use it. The same ritual is performed for each instrument, and the prayer is repeated with only a change in the name.

The young men frequently sacrifice upon the altars of the ndomo. 794 The usual content of the sacrifice is the gray lizard /margouillat/, 782 busa, likened to an uncircumcised boy (its tail representing the 825 foreskin). The victim's wanzo, liberated by death, joins the wanzo contained in the altars and, consequently, that of the members. [262] The animal is then cooked and eaten.

C. Activity of the Society

794 At the time the fields are being cultivated, the members who are called upon to do work take their ritual objects along. The young

794 girls who provide water and are present during the work sing to encourage the best workers or to insult the lazy ones.

Once their task is done, they partake on the spot of dishes /174/ especially prepared for them. As they leave they make their instruments roar and resound. By these means, the force (wanzo) which they have spent in working is "recaptured in the wind" by the twirling of the rhombos and returned to the ndomo, that is, recovered by themselves. For if their wanzo has permitted a useful effort, it has penetrated into the fields, thus diminishing by so much the store of the ndomo. On the other hand, this power, which is useful for cultivation, is harmful to germination. To leave it in the earth would injure the harvests. And this is why, as an extra precaution, the owner burns a gray lizard in his plot the following day in order to rid it completely of this evil accretion.

794 796 During the dry season, ceremonies to bring out the mask are performed for the purpose of soliciting gifts from the inhabitants of the village. The members stand in a circle before each door while the masker dances the ndomo do, the dance of the ndomo. The chief designates two young men who, placed in the center, each receive three whip lashings from their comrades. Then, the youngest strikes the masker who dances again, hitting in his turn with his long whip those who do not lower their heads correctly as a sign of respect.

If the owner who is being solicited turns a deaf ear, all sing to make fun of him and to force him to give:

"It is the custom, we are not hungry; it is the custom of the world, we are not hungry" (1).

1. Lada do, kongo tawna, dyẽ lada do kongo tawna.

When all the houses have been visited, the children line up to return and, at the chief's order, walk towards a crossroad, which is the seat of the protecting spirits of the ndomo. There they leave the mask and break their whips saying: "Crossroads, I entrust myself to you."

The gifts representing food or cowrie shells are divided up among the maskers and the three chiefs. The millet is kept for the day of the annual ceremony.

On following night, the masker goes to the crossroads and brings back to the chief the ritual objects which were temporarily left there.

D. Role of the Institution

794 182 According to Bambara expression, the ndomo is "the mother of the wanzo of the uncircumcised (1)" for its power which resides in the

1. Wanzo ba ye ceble

ritual objects /175/ is composed of the wanzo of all adolescents.

The mask and the altars at first keep a part of the wanzo of the members who wear them, manipulate them, or offer them sacrifices. On the other hand, after circumcision, at the moment of the final leap of the newly circumcised over the ritual fire, the wanzo ultimately leaves them to settle itself in the mask of the ndomo. Thus channeled and conserved, these forces add themselves to those of the uncircumcised in the masks which become the repositories of their life.

[775] Moreover, the soul of the uncircumcised and nonexcised who have died prematurely establishes itself in the altars during the funeral rites celebrated by the members.

The mask of the ndomo is thus the receptacle of the wanzo of the circumcised, living and dead; as for the altars, they contain all the souls of the uncircumcised dead. All of this confers upon the ndomo the responsibility for the life of the adolescents and gives it such power that to a certain extent, this society of young people is feared by the adults (2) who have left it.

794 833 782 2. When an adult, especially a member of the Komo society, has disturbed the peace of a member of the ndomo or has wronged the society, the wanzo may cause him to be impotent. In this case, in order to recover his virility, the man must obtain several tens of gray lizards which are sacrificed in his name on the mask and other altars. The animals are then cooked and the man is completely smeared over with the cooked substance which is then placed in the calabash and poured over the altars; the wanzo assigned to the man by the ndomo thus returns to the latter and the man is rid of its evil.

●794 No one may remain a member of the ndomo after his circumcision. It is said that an individual who would continue his activity in the ndomo would acquire a double wanzo.

/176/ Chapter 7

RITES

771 The rites of the Bambara are very complex and often involve several institutions. The following descriptions are not of a general character as the rites admit perceptible variations from one village to the next, variations of which the individuals concerned are aware, for there is no absolute rule for any institution or ceremony.

Nevertheless, their various manifestations, which adhere to this flexibility of thought, testify to the unity of the cosmological and religious representations. When a Bambara is invited to be a spectator [574] to the ceremonies of neighboring villages, he is frequently informed about this or that aspect of the ritual which is unfamiliar to him during the drinking parties which follow. In fact, tradition demands that the preceding ceremony be commented upon and explained in front of the beer jars. But the unity of the representations is such that, according to the declaration of a qualified informant, "whoever knows the principles and mechanisms may deduce from them, without explanations, the meaning and symbolism of a ritual which has not been commented upon."

On the other hand, the rites are symbolic even in their most insignificant manifestations: time and place, form of the ritual objects, aspect of the victims, repetition of formulas or prayers, mimicry of the participants, the wearing of certain secular or priestly garments, etc. A very great subtlety presides over the choice of details. It is thus that, during the stages of creation, the supernatural powers have established, organized, and reorganized the universe (skies, spaces, lands) following the itineraries which include "the cardinal directions and angles." The rites in which the cardinal points occur include gesticulation which, depending upon the power

304 which would be a dangerous one (1). The same rule applies to the
784
561

1. The approach of the virulent wanzo of the uncircumcised boy acts upon those of the boys undergoing the operations and afflicts them in the genital organs.

enclosure, consisting of several huts, where the newly circumcised boys remain under the surveillance of the sema. The enclosure is situated at a distance of several tens of meters from the village in order to isolate the age grade. For all that touches them, such as clothing, sticks, sistrums, dishes, and refuse, with the exception of
561 the cap, is impregnated with their wanzo.
304 The newly circumcised boys receive from their parents gifts of
[431] cowrie shells and food called wanzo sababu yala, "in honor of the wanzo," to speed their recovery.
[794] On the night which precedes the sixth day after the operation, a day called daworo, the children are initiated to the Komo (2).

2. See p. 203.

The following day, the sema leads them to the edge of the river, where they wash their wounds for the first time. This act, which brings about direct intervention of the element in which Faro lives, has moreover a social meaning: it consecrates the age grade and from this moment on, the children belong for the rest of their lives to the same flã, exchanging jokes and insults which are suitable between senãnku (3). It must be noted that this very simple act of communal

3. See p. 119.

ablution constitutes the inauguration of an age grade of circumcised boys and sets off from that moment all the rights and obligations its members will have toward each other.

A meal, eaten in common and accompanied by songs and dances, ends the ceremonies of the daworo. Hereafter the ablutions are repeated daily until the wounds are healed.

304 /187/ On the last day, all that has been in contact with the newly
561 circumcised boys is gathered together at a crossroad near the enclosure.
881

764 The members of the oldest age grade go to the home of the deceased. The eldest son of the Komo chief, holding /191/ the ritual whistle between his teeth, whistles alternatively in the right and left ears, then into the eyes of the dead man, which he closes while pulling his two toes. He then says: "So and so has not answered."

The chief of the Komo next comes to "touch the corpse while it is still warm in order to return to Faro that which belongs to him." He then draws a line upon the body (see Fig. 16) with his little finger dipped in boiled millet mash. In 1 and 2, the strength of the little finger acts by sending away the semen which is in the blood. In 4, it suppresses the voice (for the dead man will talk no more) as well as "the tastes, savors, and appetites of his tongue, the power of his jaws, and the air in his mouth." In 5 it returns all that was in his head, such as ideas, experiences, opinions, folly, and wisdom, through the left ear, removing all the sounds it has heard, the good as well as the bad. Next the ear is plugged. Whatever it has heard will return to the one who will inherit his soul and his double, as the dead man in the grave must hear only with his right ear the whistle of the Komo and all that will be communicated to him. In 6 it removes "the will power and stubbornness" so that the dead may submit to Faro even in the grave. It next touches the navel, 3, and all the joints to send back the semen which lies in man's marrow.

• 794 764 The corpse is then transported into a contiguous chamber for an ablution performed by a member of the society who wears over his shoulder the sack containing the Komo altars and who drones out a song celebrating the Soma Moriba Sidibé (1). The two millet stalks

1. The ablution is performed with the contents of a large gourd (dyuru fle nyẽ) to which are added the contents of a small gourd (dye fle nyẽ) which represents the "last water of the dead man."

are placed upon the body during the ablutions "which purify and calm his soul."

764 Dressed in its finest clothes, the body is brought back to the main room where its hair is shaved. The deceased's own individual altar is given to the chief of the Komo who places it near the nimara boli. It is at this time that the bell bearer (grindavo) goes to the village

364 the chief throws dust three times to the four cardinal points. The
778 masker then stands in the wind in such a way as to receive the smoke;
796 the chief and the members crouch in line behind him with their mouths open to inhale better. When the wind changes its direction they all move to continue this fumigation, wusuli, which constitutes a purification as well as an increment of forces. At the moment the fire is almost out, the most courageous of the participants stamps on it in order to assimilate better the nyama which it exudes. The ashes,
[804] gathered by the chief, are distributed, the unit of measurement being the gourd mure. An important share goes to the nyama boli, another is given as an offering to Faro, and a third is distributed among the members.

Several days later, the group goes to the river bank to the sound of drums beating out the murumuruw foli (literally, rhythm of the refuse); they throw the ashes reserved for Faro into the water and, continuing to dance, return to the village.

364 Those ashes given to the members are used to prepare the potass
778 which is mixed into the millet cake, the daily food of the Bambara, and which will make the members of the family share in the powers
252 contained in the nyamanto.

364 The eating of this mixture closes the cycle of the transfer of forces,
778 which were temporarily communicated to the refuse by the individuals, then recovered by Faro, and finally redistributed to the social body.

III. Rain Rites

789 At the time the first work is done in the fields, a drawing is made
241 with millet mash upon the tree of the Kworè in the shape of a lozenge inscribed within a rectangle, which represents "the great fire which issued /204/ from the cardinal angles" at the time of their creation. While this is being done, the following words are spoken: "The four elbows (the lozenge) are the fire of the angles; here is the anniversary of the Kworè." The clearing of the field or the first plowing always symbolizes the very first clearing obtained through fire.

During the month of May, the members of the Kworè society make
789 sacrifices upon their altars before the first rumbling of thunder in
796 order to purify the first sky where clouds are formed from the impure
794 passage of Mousso Koroni. The chief gathers the members about the tree and recites the following prayer:

789 796 794 "I have come to you, Kworè, if (the cloud) is black in the east, let it come; black in the west, let it come; black in the south, let it come; black in the north, let it come; black above, let it come, and then let it give a great water" (1). He next pours on the ground the

1. Ne nani na kwore nani na; a ma fi korona a ka na; a ma fi klebi a ka na; a ma fi woro dugu a ka na; a ma fi kefeka a ka na; a ma fi sãfe a ka na; otumana a ka ke dyi ba ye.

millet mash and the blood of fowls brought by each member. The initiation of the new members takes place during this ceremony.

After the drinking of millet beer which follows the ceremonies, it is customary to tell the story of Mousso Koroni chased by Pemba and pursued by Faro.

If, in spite of this the rain does not come soon enough, the members gather at the foot of the tree and bring with them an iron axhead which is placed in fresh water. The water is next poured out at the foot of the tree; it symbolizes the cold which the spirits of the Kworè are subjected to in the second sky during their struggles to make the rain come through.

In certain villages the sacrifices to the Kworè and to Faro are offered at the same time. At Massala and Soroba, the members go to the shore of the Niger, carrying the kworę boli with them. The bit of water which it contains is poured into the river and replaced while a prayer is addressed to Faro. The throat of a victim is then cut and some copper is thrown into the river. The altar is shaken above the water to imitate the noise of thunder and rain. Upon their return to the village, the members light a fire at the foot of the Kworè tree and place thunder stones in its embers.

"Heating the stones shakes up their soul"; when they are hot, they are plunged into cold water "to warm and to agitate the soul of water." The smoke from the fire, as well as the heat absorbed by the stones and the water, force the rain to fall.

/205/ Victims are sacrificed and the members return to the village around which they circle six times, beginning at the west. Then they return the nimara boli to the sanctuary and the elders who represent the spirit dance about on one foot to the sound of drums

as an imitation of Faro who has only one lower limb. The altar, which is placed in the sanctuary by the chief who enters it walking backwards, receives as an offering a little water from the Niger in which thunder stones have been soaking since the night before to be "refreshed." The same libation is made on the kworè boli. After returning to the home of the chief of the Komo, libations of millet mash are poured upon the walls of his house; then, in the name of Faro, the nimara boli, and the Kworè, the throat of a white ram is cut; the flesh of the animal will be thrown into the river, at the conclusion of the ceremonies.

(c) At the end of the winter season the "anniversary of the Kworè" is celebrated; its purpose is to commemorate the action of the spirits during the preceding season in order to obtain rain water.

On the fixed day, members of the society, wearing loincloth and carrying in their left hand a whip made of macerated and twisted grass, and in their other hand a torch of burning straw, gather near the tree around which they circle and sing to "gather up the Kworè." The cracking of whip lashes which they give each other represents thunder claps; the beating of the drum which accompanies their songs imitates its rumbling. The burns which they inflict upon themselves recall those which the spirits endure in the celestial combats. They next direct their steps toward the public square where the villagers have gathered and where the spirit they have supposedly invoked by their mimicry is leading them. When all have gathered, the kworeduga, who represent the spirits mounted on their winged horses ready to fly into combat, appear dressed in their traditional costumes and riding their wooden horses.

They advance while dancing and singing verses which are then taken up by a chorus of the members. The latter having formed a circle, the chief places himself in the center, whipping himself, burning himself, and pretending to swallow the fire of his torch. When he is weary he stops and the members take turns to imitate him. Powder made from ground pepper is blown into the dancers' eyes to recall the burning heat of the fiery heavens.

The kworeduga, who have by then put down their wooden horses, set their foot on the earth ready for the fight, after having seized some green tree branches. They put out the fire which has caught onto the clothing of the dancers and participants. This gesture recalls the action of the wind which, in space, put out the hot fire that

attacked /206/ the fighters. Between dances the participants drink beer brought to the spot for the occasion in order to nourish the invisible beings which they represent.

All the participants also eat a dish made up of peas, beans, groundnuts, rice, manioc, millet, fonio, cooked with baobab leaves and karite oil. This mixture is identified with the spirits' struggle with the clouds which they supposedly swallow at the height of the battle. When the ceremony draws to an end, the chief sends the women and children home and fetches the kwore boli which he swings eighteen times over the square.

In a file, the members of the society return to the tree to "bring back" the Kworè which, while invisible, has been present at all the ceremonies. They circle around the tree singing to the rhythm of the drums. Then they put out their torches and throw them at the foot of the tree along with the whips before returning to their homes. Their wounds and burns are cared for by their wives with water from the Kworè altar, this medication bearing the name of kworè kane (remedy of the Kworè).

The same dances and the comings out of the mask take place three days in succession. On the fourth day the chief and the elders, all undressed, crawl to the sanctuary for the annual sacrifice offered inside it. The chief gathers the thunder stones collected during the past year and places them in the sack containing the altars which are to be sold.

To "clarify" the mirrors, he pours millet mash over them; he cut the throat of fowls and places kola nut juice over the snake and the ñõ boli; he next fills the ñõ boli with millet previously taken from that of the Komo. With the remaining seeds he makes a mash with which to pour a libation over the sack. He next passes a burning twig of straw over the snake while saying:

"You, snake, you do not fear the fire; you must not fear fire and rain" (1).

1. E ngorongo e ma sira tasuma ne e kana sira sandyi tasuma fie.

The effect of this action is to prepare the snake by means of these burns and to attract lightning whose effects it must not fear.

776 latter animal which is imitated by the vukuri during the children's
825 nocturnal ritual described on page 65.

This new information confirms the observations noted on page 47, footnote 1, concerning the identity of the Bambara and Dogon representations. Moreover, the warableni, like the yurugu (Vulpes pallida) of the Dogon, intervenes in divination, particularly in geomancy. The investigations permit the extension of these representations to Sudanese tribes coming from Mandé (see p. 2), particularly, to the Bozo and the Peul.

Chapter 3

826 All Sudanese peoples originating in Mandé are characterized by the
773 seeds (or fish) contained in their collarbone, these varying from one
824 tribe to another. On the other hand, within a tribe, the theoretical content of the eight seeds, though roughly similar in terminology, differs in arrangement from family to family. Also the positions of the first and last seeds are reversed for men and women. Example: the blacksmiths have as their first seed the keninge and as their last the tikaninkuru, whereas the potters have as their first seed the tikaninkuru which they cultivate in the sacred fields (see p. 170) and as their last the keninge.

Moreover, after Mousso Koroni had stolen from Pemba the seeds he was entrusted to give on earth, Faro, through the intermediary of the /232/ animals who ate them at his order, reclaimed them from her; thus purified, he distributed them to men. The animal, which brought back to Faro the essential seed of each family, becomes the taboo, tne, of the family concerned, and the breaking of this taboo has the basic effect of removing the content of the culprit's collarbone. Analogous representations are noted among the Dogon.

Totemism, the so called "joking relationship" (senankuya of the Bambara), the caste system, and the exogamous laws of the Sudanese are based on the elements and classification of the contents of the collarbone.

Chapter 6

• 794 All the great adult institutions (dyo) are in contact with the
857 children's society of the Ndomo which reflects the universal organization
772

194 857 772 (space, elements). Each of the six dyo to which men are initiated after their circumcision corresponds to a ritual object in the Ndomo: the Komo (west and air) is represented by the dyara (rhombus); the Kworé (east and water) by the tori; the Nama (south and fire) by the wulu; the Kono (north and earth) by the instrument of the same name. The Yineble corresponds to the Nya (nadir) and Nago (zenith). These last two institutions are linked with the whirlwind movement of the creative seed, symbolized by the fonio seed. That is to say, membership in the children's Ndomo society constitutes a pre-initiation to the adult societies which are essentially cosmogonic. The sanctuaries and the sacred fields of the first four dyo are theoretically situated at the corresponding cardinal point. The operation of the societies according to a strict system confirms the observations and hypotheses presented on page 10.

Moreover, the mask of the Ndomo represents both Mousso Koroni and the eight seeds stolen from Pemba. All the ceremonies concerning the coming out of Bambara masks (those of the dyo as well as those of the Ciwara and the sogo) recall the theft and cultivation of nourishing seeds by Mousso Koroni and their recapture by the animals on Faro's behalf. Similar representations are observed among the Dogon concerning the yurugu, yasigi, and Nommo.

776 by greeting him as soon as he is observed; if he is unarmed, the best thing to do is to jump on him and rain so many blows on him that he loses count. Then one can escape while he is still knocked out.

[794] The second category of nyana includes a motley array of spirits, all of whom have cults. The outward manifestations of these cults have struck anyone traveling in the country, and under their apparent diversity there are recognizable general traits. All are magic practices intended to make the spirits serve man's will. By this means, man tries to make use of supernatural forces of the same nature as those whose unfavorable action he fears. He resorts to the invisible for weapons of defense and of attack. However, these practices must never go beyond certain limits, which are not too well-defined, if they are to be legitimate. Beyond these limits it becomes illicit magic or sorcery, which is especially feared and, whenever possible, relentlessly punished (2).

2. See Chapter 7 on the suba.

[128] In reality, the whole mass of these facts is extremely confused. The licit and the illicit are intertwined to the point where they cannot be disentangled. However, there are perfectly clear cases where there seems to be no doubt about the distinction; but there are all possible gradations between strictly magic practices and unadulterated sorcery.

Theoretically, the nyana are all-powerful and are honored the more in proportion to these powers, since, in general, it is their malevolent side that earns them their reputation. Homage is paid to them much more out of fear and terror than because of the kindness sometimes attributed to them. What a Bambara wants of them is the dyigi-seme, or "powerful master," who will protect him against everything and everyone and, if need be, help him against his enemies or give him the means of succeeding in some evil project.

A belief in a master of the universe exists among the Bambara, but the belief has borrowed from Islam a degree of

771 nyana and seeks to use them for utilitarian ends.
789

By virtue of the beliefs on which it is based, religion engenders a certain degree of morality. Magic uses its knowledge to exploit the Universe for material profit.

In both camps there are initiates. Whereas the most [791] famous adepts in magic live in a kind of isolation, where they jealously keep the secret of their practices and where they exist apart from human societies which at once honor and fear them, [794] religion, on the other hand, displays its cults, if not exactly publicly, at least in the circle of the faithful. The latter, since they are usually completely familiar with the ceremonies of the cult and with the high-priests, are the masters and most venerated members of society.

Religion receives its most reliable support from the natural family and from the communities derived from that family. Legal magic has copied these organizations in the form of brotherhoods, which Europeans call "secret societies," a kind of spiritual family in which the members are only gradually admitted to all secrets.

Whereas the religion of the manes forms the strongest link that holds together the members of a community, and represents the framework of the society, magic on the other hand cares little for this union and in fact helps to disrupt it by the hatred it engenders. Thanks to magic, the individual feels competent to challenge the community and never fails to do so.

Let us look more closely into the traits characteristic of religion and those characteristicof magic.

By studying all that concerns especially the patriarchal and family communities and the associations growing out of these communities we shall be able to see the place occupied by the religion of the manes and of the spirits, as well as the effect of magic upon the basic manifestations of the life of these communities.

789 Since magic, in a sense, envelops every act of the native, it seems to us essential, at the start, to look into its characteristics so as to facilitate the understanding of all that is to follow, which is impreganted by magic in so many ways.

769 As a substitute for the chicken, it is very common to
782 offer some dege, a bit of millet coarsely ground and thrown in a little water. The fa keeps this liquid in a small gourd. It is perhaps [182] reasonable to think that this is the most ancient manner of honoring the dead and, in particular, calling for their protection in obtaining the two essentials of life: grain and water.

[273] An equally common libation is made with dio, a kind of millet beer which every Bambara enjoys drinking to the point of intoxication. The dead could hardly fail to be pleased with an offering of what they had enjoyed so much on earth!

[276] One must conclude, too, that offerings of kola nuts please the dead because it gives them a chance to enjoy a favorite treat. The officiator chews the kola nut and then spits out his saliva mixed with the juice and remains along the walls of the bloŋ'.

Such are the ordinary offerings, but on special occasions the quantity and importance of the gifts are increased according to the desired results. When many people are present and the house is prosperous, the victims are oxen and sheep. It should [781] not be forgotten that the flesh of these consecrated victims, eaten in common, makes a very strong mystical bond between the participants; it is a true communion. It is generally conceded that the bond created by drinking consecrated liquids together is much less strong.

776 In addition to his ancestors, every Bambara has as his
778 special protector, one of those gods (nyana) which are created wholly by the work of the magician. Every family has one or more nyana, whose priest is the fa. The boli, the symbol and altar of this type of divinity, is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put into a leather or canvas sack, a gourd, or a pot. The nyana of Sounsan, the ancestor of the Massa-si, was a n-ko whose boli was kept in a monkey skin. The boli is taken out of its cover so that libations can be poured over it and animal remains smeared on it. If there is some objection to exposing it, the offering is put on the cover.

769 Everything that takes place relative to the cult of the
794 nyana is analogous to that described for the cult of the ancestors.

769 It has the same base: request, offering, communion. In ad-
794 dition, there is a liturgy appropriate to each nyana, in particular, the mysterious sayings that attract the god and make him [183] the actual servitor of the person uttering these sayings, rather than a benevolent protector. This shows the antithesis as to final ends between religion and magic, as was set forth in Chapter 2 of the present work.

596 The fa also has the responsibility of maintaining the
614 efficacy of magic weapons; he must fulfill all the obligations
778 required by each of them. Among them there are true nyana, sometimes independent, sometimes a part of the great nyana. Mostly they are amulets or talismans whose virtue depends on certain rites or simply on the observance of certain interdicts.

596 Finally, the fa is the guardian of custom and family
614 relics, which likewise have a religious basis since custom,
778 after all, is the continuing will of the generations, the imperious mandate of the ancestors, the table of law of the manes. Any transgression of custom is certain to bring the worst disasters. The relics are ordinary or ceremonial objects left by the successive fa. Some of them are so strongly associated with the patriarchal office that on special occasions or in certain circumstances the fa is forced by custom to wear these objects impregnated with the virtue of the ancestors. The cap and weapons of Biton at Ségou were of this nature, and such is the case among the Massa-si.

596 Relations between members of the community. Theo-
614 retically, the powers of the fa over the members of the community are absolute. He can hire them out, offer them as security, sell them, and even put them to death (1). He also

1. Note how Ma-n-son got rid of some of his brothers.

has the right to use whatever belongs to them,(2) both persons

2. Ngolo sacrificed his son's son.

596 614 621 583 This conjugal union differs clearly from [227] ordinary forms of marriage. In view of the fact that the husband gets a wife without paying a bride price for her, the wife is not given in usufruct, and therefore she must be treated with the greatest consideration or she may be taken back. The situation can only be normalized if the husband is rich enough to present to the donor a gift equal to or preferably, if possible, greater than the dowry brought by the wife, or he may give a similar gift to the wife (1).

1. Such property is the wife's paraphernalia.

In these situations also, the procedure varies a great deal. The donor may offer a girl from another community and provide her with a dowry. This is what Biton did in order to bind Ngolo to him: Biton gave him a girl designated by the marabouts as one of the elect, and he also provided the girl with a rich dowry.

The significance of such alliances can be estimated only when one has some knowledge of the intentions of the parties involved, especially those of the donor. We shall see one important type in the chapter on Islam, the marriage of Allah.

IV. The common cult (2). The territorial community.

311 621 776 794 2. Communities may be united under the protection of the same god. Here we shall study only their union under the protection of the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-siri). Other common cults will be studied in the following chapter, "Brotherhoods."

In the mind of the Bambara, the earth, together with everything in it, is the property of the spirits. As a result, no one may make use of it or presume to settle on or cultivate an unused field without first going through certain ceremonies.

For this purpose, either on his own responsibility or, more often, with the aid of "the one who knows" (don-na-ba), a

311 Bambara seeks the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-
621 siri) or, more exactly, determines where this genie dwells. It
776 may be a spring, a hill, or a rock; often it is a fine tree, in-
794 variably surrounded by a grove or at least with a grove nearby.
Then, always following the same procedure, he finds out the conditions under which the genie will allow someone to settle in his domain in order to live there and cultivate the lands. Thus, a contract is worked out which governs the man's exploitation of the genie's territorial domain. As a result, provided he worships the genie in the manner required, the man [228] will be able to work under the protection of the god. Anyone who has had a share in the contract, even if only through representatives, will likewise profit if he scrupulously observes the conditions.

621 The establishment of a village requires the cooperation of
622 several communities, each represented by its fa. One of these fa
793 will either appropriate the leadership or be chosen as the rep-
794 resentative or chief of the others. Sometimes he may be merely primus inter pares; otherwise he may have managed to have his primacy conceded by the rest. It is this chief who treats with the genie in the name of the whole village; thus, he becomes the "high priest of the genie" (nyana-n-son-na-ba) with the essential function of "making the offerings" (son') required by the cult. Furthermore, he administers the earthly domain of the genie and is therefore called dugu-tigi (master of the earth).

To the nyana dugu-da-siri is usually attributed the same dyamu as that of its high priest, just as though the genie belonged to the spiritual family of the priest. This is a result consistent with the mentality of the Bambara.

621 The same mental state accounts for the custom in certain
776 villages of dedicating a living animal, often a ram, to the
778 nyana dugu-da-siri and believing it to be the god's mount. The
[825] animal is allowed to wander freely about the village, and its mischief is never punished; indeed, the people enjoy caressing and indulging it. The animal takes on some of the attributes of the genie and is, as it were, endowed with certain supernatural virtues, so only good can come from contact with it.

621 Theoretically, each settlement has only one genie, but
776 actually it may have several, especially if it has been settled by

successive groups, each recognizing a genie-protector. In that case, the genie first recognized and worshiped takes precedence over the others. In any case, social life requires each segment to respect the gods of its neighbors, and this respect carries with it a certain amount of superstitious fear.

It is evident from the foregoing that occupying and cultivating land poses certain problems for the settlement benefited, and these may be grouped under three heads: the cult of the genie-protector; the exploitation of the land; and the organization of the territorial community.

The cult. This is mainly supported by the high priest, whose principal duty is to "make the offerings" (son') to the "genie" [229] (nyana), hence his title nyana-son-na-ba. He is assisted by the council of fa, one of whom, the syere (follower), may replace him in case of need. The office of high priest is for life and is inherited in the same way as his faya. This continuity shows that the genie is actually regarded as a kind of spiritual ancestor of the priest, as we have seen from the fact that it is given the same dyamu as its high priest.

The cult ceremonies are very simple. They consist of offerings made by the high priest, who at the same time indicates to the genie the purpose for which they are being made. The most solemn ceremonies take place when millet is sown and harvested. For these occasions, every worshiper is expected to bring a contribution in proportion to his resources. The kind of gift is not specified; everyone brings whatever he can or whatever he wishes, usually animals (sheep, beef, fowl, etc.), grain, and especially millet beer (dlo).

During these general gatherings, from which no one is excluded, only the high priest and the members of the council enter the sacred grove or approach the genie's abode. There, the high priest makes known the purpose of the sacrifice: to thank the genie for his past favors; to offer him the gifts brought by everyone; and to ask him to continue to protect the community so that its prosperity may be assured. Then the victims are sacrificed, and their blood is sprinkled on the tree trunk or whatever object or place is reputed to be the home of the genie.

genie. The same is done with libations of dlo or the juice of kola nuts. Since anything offered to the genie is supposed to be consumed on the spot, an orgy lasting for several days usually follows.

In addition to these two great obligatory ceremonies especially concerned with the exploitation of the land, the god's protection is sought by similar, but much simplified means in all affairs whether they concern the entire settlement (wars, disasters), a particular patriarchal or familial community, or even a single individual. Through the high priest as intermediary, the offering and the request are made for the purpose indicated by the petitioner, who often promises to make a further gift to the genie when his wish has been granted. Vows of this type are made very frequently.

The cult of his high [230] priests and of all the important men of the settlement is tied in with the cult of the genie, obviously a consequence of the fact that the genie is the spiritual patron of the community which honors him; its members are his children and with him form what amounts to a family. So, in line with what happens in a patriarchal or familial community, the territorial community also holds an annual festival for the dead, during which special honor is paid to noted personages, among whom deceased high priests have first place.

Exploitation of the land. The high priest in charge of the cult likewise regulates everything concerning the exploitation of the terrestrial domain of the genie, and in this capacity he is known as the dugu-tigi (1), master of the earth. In this

1. In line with common practice, I shall henceforth use this title to designate both capacities, the high priest and the master of the earth.

office he has the help of the council of fa, and in important matters he must follow their advice.

With the help of this council, he allots the land when

621 These are the principal resources of the community
622 treasury, which is held and administered by the dugu-tigi with
651 the help and under the control of the fa. The dugu-tigi may
652 use the treasury to help him perform his duties honorably, to assist unfortunate or indigent members of the community, to receive the guests of the community in a suitable manner, and to meet emergencies.

[661] Under no circumstances does this treasury constitute any part of the personal fortune of the dugu-tigi. Only usurpation, which is fairly common under various guises, alters this state of affairs. In the same way, it is not uncommon for this wealth to be divided in some measure among the members of the council, who in one way or another appropriate it. Such abuses, no matter how common, do not in the least alter the principle that legally such wealth is and remains exclusively the property of the community. [234]

Chapter 4

Brotherhoods

1. The End of Childhood

● 794 881 General considerations. The cult of the ancestors and of the nyana dugu-da-siri are not enough for the Bambara in his efforts to make sure of the protection, help, and services of the invisible world. The magician has created for him some renowned protectors or servitors which are powerful and formidable: the nyana of the boli.

The cult of these gods gives rise to spiritual families whose members are so closely linked by the bonds of fraternity that we may safely say that these groupings are brotherhoods. All these brotherhoods share the common characteristic that no one can be received into them before having submitted to a certain rite called soli (1) or bolo-ko (1), terms which

1. Soli is the word for the action of piercing, emerging, laying an egg, or

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being born; bolo-ko literally means "affair involving birth."

etymologically mean "birth."

Having entered the family through physical birth, a child enters a new phase of his life through the spiritual birth represented by the soli. Through this rite, a child in fact ceases to belong to sexless childhood and becomes: the boy, a man; the girl, a woman. Let us look at the stages of this change of status which is truly the principal event of a native's life.

857 Until he is about seven years old, a small boy lives in daily contact with his mother, only slipping away, as time goes on, to play nearby with his friends.

During this period, one can already observe the influence [235] of the native milieu on the development of his young soul. He has watched cult and magic practices, and he too plays at being a magician to kill or capture rats, lizards, and other small animals for his little feasts. He collects roots with simulated rites and attaches them to his toy bow so as to ensure the success of his hunting, believing that he has attracted a spirit by promising an offering of the blood of his victims. He is already a little hunter, seeking mysterious procedures through which game can be and ought to be put at his mercy without danger to himself.

881 Around the age of seven, he is thinking about the crucial
794 act of his life, the soli, one of whose rites is that of circumcision.

Observance of the soli, complete with public circumcision and preceded and followed by membership in a brotherhood, is not absolutely indispensable. When, by reason of circumstances, a child lives in an isolated situation, he undergoes the soli within the family circle, without fuss, and this in no way lessens the validity of the act.

881 There is no doubt, however, that nothing but absolute
794 necessity will make a Bambara do this; he loathes such wretched
561 economy, which in any case seems inappropriate to such an im-
571 portant occasion (1). On the contrary, he loves to take part in

1. Besides, since no exact age limit is

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imposed and since there may be as much as six or seven years' difference in age between the oldest and youngest children participating in the same soli, it is obviously possible for a candidate to arrange to be included at some point within this range of ages so as not to be an isolated case.

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a noisy demonstration and to share in all of the rejoicing the brotherhoods provide for their members. This is by no means the least of the reasons for the spread of these brotherhoods, to which the n-Tomo (2) is really the front door, since no one is

2. n-Tomo is the term used in the Ségou area; in Kaarta the term n-Tori is used.

admitted to a brotherhood unless he is soli-ma, and the specific final object of the n-Tomo is the soli.

n-Tomo

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The n-Tomo is an association which, in preparation for the soli, bands together boys (3) of about seven to fourteen years

3. Little girls have no organized society to prepare them for the soli, but they have agreements among themselves and, in addition, are chosen as n-golo-moso-u by the n-Tomo-den'-u.

Each [236] n-Tomo normally includes all the boys due to be circumcised, without distinction by race or rank. Each member is called n-Tomo-den'; the eldest is the leader or n-Tomo-tigi, and he is assisted by a syere or "follower." New members are received every year at the time of the annual festival, and they must pay an entrance fee (a chicken) and a few cowries

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575 association, each fula-ni is a ton'-den'.

The bachelors and some of the married men regard the fla-n-ton' simply as a means of having a good time in the company of boon companions. Anything brought by an individual member goes to swell the common fund which is most often used to organize feasts and drinking bouts. At these banquets, it is customary to comply with rules which appear curious at first sight and which must be obeyed unless the member wants to pay a fine into the common fund. Thus, anyone who acts on his own prior to or contrary to an order from the ton-tigi, anyone who comes or leaves, blows his nose, [250] spits, sneezes, and so on, without permission, is fined. Aside from the profit to the common fund, the procedure has its uses in making the ton-den' amenable to discipline.

In principle, the treasury of the fla-n-ton' is supposed to be used only to succor poor, embarrassed, or unfortunate members, who are expected to repay with interest insofar as they are able to do so. In theory, also, all of the ton-den' can count on moral and material aid from their fla-ni whenever there is need for it. It goes without saying that this fine spirit of altruism is rarely put into practice.

The fact of the matter is that the young masters (kamale-u) make use of the organization to resist the omnipotence of the elders (koro-u); malcontents of all sorts take refuge in it; adventurers find it useful in promoting their schemes. We shall see how the two most powerful Bambara empires were built on the fla-n-ton'.

2. General Considerations Concerning the Brotherhoods

Origin of the Brotherhoods

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794 There is no reason to suppose that the Bambara brotherhoods are not purely native institutions; similar organizations are to be found all over Africa, particularly in areas untouched by Moslem influence. All of them follow similar principles made manifest in ways characteristic of African occultism.

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794 There is no doubt, however, that in the case of the Bambara with whom we are here concerned this native foundation

177 has acquired various elements brought in from the outside world
794 by Berbers, Arabs, and others, or by Sudanese pilgrims returning from the Orient. In any event, this foreign occultism -- usually oriental -- certainly did not give rise to or greatly modify the local Sudanese occultism; it merely strengthened its organization, its institutions, and its methods by adding new knowledge.

The legend (1) which claims that the nyana of the boli

1. Reported below in the chapter on Islam.

are a Moslem importation does not mean that these "gods" were introduced [251] actually and exclusively by such means. It means only that pre-existing native institutions have received foreign support from pilgrims or others returning or arriving from the Orient.

Dogma

794 Are these brotherhoods based on a more or less secret teaching of cardinal truths? It does not seem to me to be risky to say that they are not. Everything in these cults may be summed up as empirical practices which are believed to have the effect of forcing a "god" (that is, an extranatural force) to serve man. The aim is essentially utilitarian and worldly: to acquire a "powerful protector" (dyigi seme) for defence, for offence, and especially for the purpose of attaining sufficient power for the realization of all desires.

Such an alliance with a god by means of a cult compels one to behave in certain ways, but discipline of this type does not lead to the improvement of either the individual or the society through the acquisition of what we call moral qualities or virtues. It is all the more obvious, then, that the brotherhoods are not trying to assure their members entry into a supernatural world; they can barely claim to assure them protection and a modicum of material well-being. A spiritual mysticism is unknown to them (1).

1. However, see Chapter 7. [Not translated.]

Methods

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789 Are the rites and magical practices used in the brotherhoods efficacious?

Here, as in all matters, the Blacks operate by feeling their way, imitation, or adaptation, all incomplete. Just as an ignorant man is perfectly capable of accidentally starting a clockworks whose mechanism he does not understand and so can either start or stop it, put it out of order, or break it, so a Black can sometimes, by a kind of empiricism, get results similar to those of the magnetizers, hypnotists, magicians, and alchemists of all times and places.

Without plan or method, the Sudanese magicians and sorcerers [252] have nevertheless not worked in vain. In the process of arousing the native's emotional temperament and keeping it ever aroused, they have created an atmosphere favorable to the rise and propagation of psychic phenomena. Any type of spirituality would benefit from this age-old process by which the Sudanese soul is all the better prepared to broaden its mystical tendencies toward the cult of the manes which the magicians have carefully kept within the material domain of immediate utility.

We have never heard of a single magician who, when he seeks to penetrate the invisible, has sought to understand its arrangement so as to regulate his own life with a view to attaining a privileged position in that world invisible to us. Each of them is merely trying to obtain a fragment of the universal energy in order to realize his worldly designs. Still, this continual striving toward the supernatural has often strengthened the feeling toward the manes through the spirituality that has been aroused. Thus, as magic loses its power, man's desire for the supernatural, lacking a goal, augments the cult of the manes until it goes on to something higher. Thus a new spirituality is created on the native plane, which is easily oriented toward revealed religions when they know how to receive it.

Nyana

794 776 Each brotherhood is founded on the cult of a spirit (nyana). What we call "spirit" to indicate its immateriality, the Bambara from another point of view calls "power," "master," "lord", etc., for such is the meaning of the words nya, nyana, nama, dyara, komo, faro, etc., by which he designates the innumerable "gods" of his pantheon, thus affirming his subjection to this invisible restraint upon him.

It is the magician who creates the nyana of the boli worshiped by the brotherhoods with which we are here concerned. His incantations call up a kind of echo from the invisible; his persistent and peremptory practices produce a sort of personification of his desire in the depths of the universal and diffuse energy, because he "names" the thing he wants. The nyana thus created, which he attracted by "naming" it, is retained by offerings and sacrifices, just as a person is seduced by presents. Finally, he forges a link with the nyana through communion. From that point on creature and creator are [253] so closely bound to each other that neither can refuse anything to the other; they form a single being whose visible aspect is completed by the invisible.

Judging from statements, concepts, and practices, this is the native belief as to the mysterious work of the magician. The latter creates as many nyana as he likes, and he draws at will on the invisible which he fashions and rules.

Boli

794 778 Mankind in general and the native in particular need to give material support to their speculations. The magician and the believer alike need to have at hand the nyana, this essence which is personified by being "named." Appropriate procedures make the nyana come to that altar which at the same time is its symbol and which the Bambara call boli (1).

1. Otherwise known as buri. It should be noted that in ordinary language the

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terms nyana and boli are used interchangeably. This is natural enough since the latter is merely the symbol of the former.

Each nyana has a boli which in form and substance is peculiar to it. Anything may be used to make boli: horn or hair of the hare, hind, or cattle; nails or claws; animal venom or excretions. It is not unusual to find parts of a human body put to use. As the chronicle tells, the war drums of the ton-dyon' were elevated to the rank of boli and were then adorned [727 762] with the craniums and jaws of human beings sacrificed to them. Often the ball tied to the end of a piece of rope or leather and used to beat the tabala [Tr., big drum] is a human hand which has been severed and wrapped in a leather cover.

Certain of the boli, particularly those of the Komo and the Kono, are said to be made of a child's torso; those of the Tyi-wara and Nama are made of wood, and those of the Duga of horn.

All sorts of shapes are employed: men, animals, doll-like figures, balls, small crowns, etc. The principal boli, called boli-de-n-fa, is accompanied by subsidiary ones called boli-de.

The boli is also given sex: one is male, another female; and it is said that there is a kind of mystical copulation [254] from which at the time of initiation are born the spiritual sons of the nyana.

Among boli should be noted those made of forked sticks, such as the n-Golo and the Tyi-wara, both patrons of brotherhoods of young men (1).

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1. If one makes certain comparisons, the forked stick seems to deserve special attention. Among the Khassonké, for instance, the soli-ma always build their seclusion hut (bire) with a forked post in the center. This post, called biri-makho (master of the hut), is a tree trunk chosen

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and cut by the gankurango (magician-protector of the soli-ma among the Khassonké) because it is so placed in the forest that the normal progress of the sun follows the axis formed by the two branches of the fork. There is thus some relation between the sun and the forked tree called biri-makho. Perhaps the same relationship accounts for the sleeping position of the boys in the bire: they always lie with their heads toward the center post and their bodies forming the spokes of a wheel around it. During the soli ceremonies the same Khassonké soli-ma use a short wand forked at one end.

The forked stick with mystical significance is also found among the Koniagui.

It is not possible, given the present state of our knowledge, to be specific about the origin or significance of this symbol. For the same reason, we cannot say whether it can be related to the lyre-shaped stones found in the mysterious collection of rocks discovered in Gambia, in which there is thought to be discernible a clearly defined cult of the sun (cf. Bulletin du Comité d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F., 1920, No. 1).

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778 To the European these boli are thoroughly repulsive objects. Since magic utilizes everything (2), all kinds of things

2. And particularly things which are considered repulsive in ordinary life.

are used to make them, and during the sacrifices, blood, hair, feathers, viscera, etc., are usually placed on the boli. The result is usually a repugnant sight. The native, however, seems to pay no attention to this repulsive aspect which so horrifies

Europeans. The Black sees only the symbolic altar which he venerates. Besides, in theory at least, the boli does not acquire its prestige in the eyes of the Black from its strange or bizarre nature; the fact that it is consecrated confers upon it its sacred character and its ritual use. That is why, in general (3), the

> 3. I say "in general" because there are exceptions. The skull of a chief named Sama, who ruled over a village called Gniningo in the Gangaran area, was the boli of a cult created by that chief. When the skull was destroyed, that put an end to the cult, since it was impossible to replace this unique object.

destruction of a boli no more means the destruction of [255] the corresponding cult than destroying a statue of Buddha would mean the annihilation of Buddhism.

The making and consecration of a boli are matters not easily accessible to the profane. Here is what Raffenel's informant, Bouo, told him about a boli belonging to the Massa-si: "The sorcerers first sought a very rare tree. They approached it in a procession, dug a hole at its foot, and after invocations in an unknown tongue gathered parts of its roots with bizarre ceremonies. Using the same invocations and ceremonies, they procured some hairs from the tail of a black horse. So that these ingredients should answer their purpose, they had one of their number take off his trousers and shirt and then pick up the objects (1). The bark and the horsehair were placed in an earthen

> 1. It is common for a sorcerer to remove all his clothing for the performance of his duties.

vessel and remained there for half a day over a hot fire. During this last day the proxy of the magicians prostrated himself, face to the ground, seven times seven times, while reciting prayers in a language which no one could understand.

794 778 "After the creation came the consecration. The Kouroubari and the leaders of the people witnessed it. A white ox, a red ox, and a red rooster were sacrificed for the occasion (2)."

2. Raffenel, Nouveau voyage au Pays des Nègres [New Journey to the Country of the Negroes], Vol. 1, p. 237.

The boli is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put in a sack or other receptacle, and except during ceremonies it [346] is stored with other cult objects in a kind of temple often resembling a miniature native hut and called nyana-bon', "hut of the nyana."

[776] Obviously there are differences between the various nyana, because peculiar practices call up unlike spirits. In any event, however, the captive spirit is, as it were, a slave of the magician, who treats it as such and even sells it, along with instructions for its use. There are magicians who go from place to place, making and selling nyana and other magic weapons, and [443] there are recognized markets where one can always [256] obtain the boli of the most popular nyana. The markets at Bélédougou, Bendougou, and Follona are especially well known.

Trade in Boli

794 778 438 The chronicle of Ségou tells that Biton, the founder of the empire, acquired his principal idols in the Bendougou region where the popular markets of Moribala, Kourbadougou, and Diali are located.

Itinerant merchants deal in all sorts of cult objects, and there are settled traders who are sometimes very well known, like a certain Minkoli who made boli and was so famous that his village is named after him: Minkoli ka dugu (village of Minkoli). I have never been able to find out, however, which village in the Bendougou area was the home of the famous Minkoli.

By such means the cult of a given nyana, once it has been created, spreads to some extent, depending on the degree

794 778 438 to which its creator chooses to reveal the ritual of initiation.

The head of a family, just like an isolated individual or the head of a large community, will not fail to acquire, for a monetary consideration, exclusive possession of one of these powerful boli, which becomes his personal protector. Sounsan, the ancestor of the Massa-si, had with him the nyana n-Ka; Biton, the founder of the empire of Ségou, possessed several famous nyana: na n-Golo-ko (1), Nye-n-dinge du (2), and ba Kung-o-

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1. Literally, na-n-Goloko, "the mother concerned with birth" or, freely translated, "the goddess who presides at birth."

2. Nye dinge du, "the deep orbit of the eye."

ba (3). Generally speaking, these private cults cannot spread,

3. Ba-kung-o-ba, "mother of the great bush."

but when their possessor becomes a powerful chief, they migrate rapidly. This is what happened to Biton's cults; his followers took up the worship of his idols.

794 When an individual becomes the acknowledged possessor of a nyana the result is an alliance with this nyana, which in the native language is called furu, the same word as that used for the [833] conjugal union of a man and a woman. Indeed, the installation of a renowned nyana in its master's village gives rise to rejoicing [257] similar to that occasioned by a wedding; hence, the following expressions: a ye boli furu, "he is united with a boli"; a ye boh' furu gosi, "he has effected a union with a boli"; a-ta boli konyo kera, "he has celebrated the wedding of his boli." On the day of such festivals, the master of the nyana (nyana-tigi or boli-tigi, surrounded by his acolytes, offers dlo to his guests who have come to greet him and give him presents. At nightfall, when the uninitiated have withdrawn, the clergy and the adepts in a procession take the boli to the "sacred wood" where the first cult ceremony is held, characterized principally by dancing and singing.

778 The cash value of boli varies considerably. At the most
435 it is between 30 and 40 francs, payable in kind or in cowries. The cost is increased, however, by gifts to the seller and his acolytes who come to instruct the new clergy in their functions. As a result, considering the various kinds of refreshments, dogs, goats, and chickens, as well as kola nuts and millet beer (dlo), the price may actually come to 100 francs.

778 Since the nyana-tigi (master of the nyana) has full con-
794 trol over his nyana, he may admit anyone he likes to the benefits of his cult. Well-known cults have been much sought after, and as they developed, they became complicated. As the importance of a cult increases, its ceremonies are amplified and augmented in proportion to the number of people taking part in them. Initiation requires a fee, and a clergy becomes necessary. This is the way that these cults, established through participation, have given rise to associations which the Europeans call "secret societies" but which might better be called "brotherhoods," because of the spiritual filiation uniting the affiliates.

Mysteries and Liturgical Equipment

Everything that concerns the brotherhood of the nyana is shrouded in mystery; for various reasons, everything is concealed (do, as the natives put it). It is, indeed, a principle of magic that power exists only insofar as its essence evades the investigation of its adversaries. The uninitiated therefore, must not know the basis of the supernatural power of the nyana, because, if they knew, they would be able to acquire the means of [258] destroying it, resisting it, or at the very least rendering it inefficacious. Anything related to the nyana is bound to it and is, so to speak, an integral part of the nyana by virtue of consecration: the clergy and the liturgical equipment. That is why both are do and why every effort is made to hide them, in their magical aspect, from curiosity of the profane. By extension, however, all members of a brotherhood of any nyana of the boli in Bambara country are identified as do-u, "the hidden people."

794 Some of the clergy use a disguise when officiating in
[292] public; furthermore, the ceremonies are held only at night.
Finally, in the presence of the profane, the initiated
[198] use a special language for everything referring specifically to
the cult. The greatest secret of all is the name of the nyana,
[551] because anyone who knows the name has complete power over
the spirit it designates.

794 From the point of view of the disguised clerical body,
298 this secrecy is virtually impenetrable. A disguised person loses
his human personality and is withdrawn from the natural world.
It is an accepted fact that it is dangerous for those not affiliated
to intercept his glance through the tiny openings in the mask;
undoubtedly his person on that occasion is impregnated with a
fluid whose emanations are fatal to those who, not being
affiliated, are unprotected against them.

Some of these disguises include a headdress or mask
and for the body a kind of costume usually made of long strips
of vegetal material; is this, as has been suggested, simply a
means of dominating the herd of adepts and even more the pro-
fane through the terror such regalia inspires when seen at night
by the flickering light of torches and bonfires? It seems more
probable that one must put this matter on the plane of the
supernatural in order to understand it. Dangerous wild animals
[825 are believed to be incarnations of evil and powerful gods, and
776] an attempt is made to present an outward appearance consistent
with the terror merely seeing them inspires, in order thereby
to acquire the supernatural qualities that characterize them (1).

> 1. There is no doubt that some individ-
> uals, under the influence of the role of
> wild beast that they are portraying, have
> been led to commit actual murders during
> ritual observances. I have often heard
> this asserted in connection with the dyara
> (lion).

794 It should be noted that the costume, gestures, [259]
782 dances, songs, and music of the dye-n-fa and their acolytes

794 are all designed to attract and capture the god and, for this
782 purpose, to transfer the officiant from our world to the supernatural one. I have never heard anyone claim that the costume and the various actions of the officiant were intended to counterfeit the nyana, nor that the boli in any way represented the native's idea of the god.

The Clergy

793 Even though, in theory, familial nyana are inherited, those worshiped by the brotherhoods are usually bought. The head of the brotherhood is called the nyana-tigi (master of the nyana) (1), whether he has inherited the office, been elected

1. Ordinarily the word nyana is replaced by the specific name of the nyana, Komo, Nama, Nya, etc.

to it, or has imposed himself by virtue of being the most prominent founder of the brotherhood. It is he who keeps the boli, hence his title of boli-tigi, and who knows all the secrets of the cult. His duty is to direct the cult and to administer the brotherhood, and this gives him considerable local prestige.

The initiates of higher rank are called dye-n-fa-u, "masters of the truth." The nyana-tigi chooses his aides from this group, particularly the person who, "seized by the god" (wara-mina-den), becomes the "oracle" (wara-da). The role
[787 791] of medium requires special persons who can go into a trance under the influence of the animating spirit, and the wara-da has the duty of choosing and training the person who will succeed him or replace him, if the need arises (2).

2. These dye-n-fa students are called soma-de (elder sons) in the Komo brotherhood.

All the initiates are to some extent diviners through practices which are peculiar to them, and the brotherhoods often

793 provide instruction in deductive divination, which usually requires two years of study.

This clergy is recruited and formed by co-optation, and it includes, besides the persons already mentioned, the muru-kala-tigi (3) or "sacrificer," who kills the victims, and a dyeli

3. Literally, "he who holds the handle of the knife."

or "herald" of the god.

794 The rank and file of the faithful are called nyana-den u, sons of the nyana (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above]. In order to be accepted as nyana-den', it is necessary [260] to take an oath and to pay an entrance fee. The terms of the oath used in the brotherhoods reveal that, in sum, the nyana-den' promises secrecy, obedience, and solidarity, as we shall show in what follows. Certain aides of the clergy are selected from among the common run of the faithful, for instance, the da-ro-tigi or da-ro-ta-la, who is a kind of beadle.

The Treasury

The performance of liturgical ceremonies is not the only function of the clergy; it also constitutes a kind of council to administer the property of the brotherhood, for the cult is not gratuitous. First, admission to the brotherhood requires the payment of a fee, and the same is true whenever an individual is nominated or promoted to an office. Furthermore, an important contribution, in proportion to the individual's resources, is required for any important ceremony. Finally, fines are imposed on the faithful and even on outsiders as punishment for wrong doings.

794 681 Fines assume many forms, whether they are to atone for a wrong committed by one of the faithful against the brotherhood or the god, whether an outsider is to be punished similarly for arousing the wrath of the nyana, or for reasons sometimes known only to the clergy who levies them. The nyana-tigi and

794 his acolytes are exceedingly zealous in discovering wrong-
681 doings and the guilty parties and in requiring material proof of repentance, which they determine and try to multiply since they appropriate the whole profit, albeit abusively. Theoretically, these fines are not very heavy and are paid in kind (fowl, a goat, a dog, some kola nuts, millet, beer), but, when multiplied, they become a heavy burden for the debtor. He cannot evade this method of extortion, because his persecutors, in league against him, use every means, even criminal, to force him to pay.

794 Strictly speaking, all the property belongs to the nyana;
421 it is by rights the common property of the nyana-den' and in
426 principle is not to be privately appropriated nor alienated. It is to be used only for the needs of the cult, for assisting needy members, and in exceptional cases for loans to outsiders at exorbitant interest. For that matter, the nyana-den' who gets a loan from the common fund must repay it [261] as soon as his affairs take a turn for the better and, insofar as possible, add a certain amount in order to show his gratitude. It sometimes happens that an outsider is aided out of the common fund; this is a kind of charity which is both a good advertisement and extremely profitable.

794 The common property is not to be appropriated by any
421 dignitary or member of the brotherhood for his own benefit. Although there is certainly not a single native who is unaware of this regulation (1), it is all too evident that abuses have led

1. Raffenel writes (op. cit., p. 239): "The victims' flesh and other objects become the property of the poor."

to extraordinary perversions. The clergy regularly appropriates the property of the nyana to its own use, and in order to increase the profit, they do not hesitate to commit actual crimes that enable them to exploit the terror they inspire, which they are careful to nurture and to reinforce.

The Operation of the Brotherhood

794 A brotherhood is a spiritual family whose internal affairs are conducted like those of a community with natural filiation. The nyana-tigi has the role of fa, and the assemblage of dye-n-fa-u, reinforced by the initiated and the leading believers, serve as the community council. Thus, questions confined to the cult and to administrative matters are dealt with by the nyana-tigi acting alone or with his council, just like the fa in the community. Therefore, the description of the latter's duties which has been given above will suffice to explain by analogy the practices in the brotherhoods. There are, however, certain details peculiar to the brotherhoods, and these will be set forth in what follows.

The Cult

794 The cult is made public during certain ceremonies, of
786 which the two most important are the one at the time of sowing and the other at the time of harvest. It is accepted as fact in the brotherhoods that at planting time the boli copulate so as to produce issue at the time of harvest, hence the hymn to Nama which says: "boli fyerela ka den' (the boli has flowered to bring forth fruit)." These ceremonies are accompanied by orgies [262] during which the celebrants, both men and women, are said to indulge in sexual licentiousness. It may be concluded from these two series of happenings that the rites seek by appropriate mimicry to encourage the fruitfulness of nature.

794 There are other indications which show that it is indeed
776 toward nature that the rites are directed. In certain brother-
825 hoods, notably the Kore, the costumed officiants who farm the cartege pretend to be wara-u (wild beasts), suruku-u (hyenas), golo-u (monkeys), and other terrifying inhabitants of the bush (1).

1. They are all called wara or sogo, terms used for all wild animals. It should be noted that every nyana is called wara (power, lord).

794 It is not rash to suppose that in this case they are symbolizing
776 the role, probably primordial and in any event primary, of
825 the nyana to control the supernatural and particularly malevolent forces of the bush. As a matter of fact, the most popular and important nyana are the protectors of the harvests which represent virtually the only property of the natives. One of the nyana is even especially concerned with agricultural work (2);

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2. In the native vocabulary, "to work" (tya-ke, short for tyi-ya-ke) primarily means "to work in the fields."

this is Tyi-wara (god of agricultural work), who presides over the first clearing of the land at the beginning of the winter season.

In any case, whether the animal is regarded as the visible form of a spirit or, if one prefers, the perceptible manifestation of a supernatural force, the belief is strengthened by the common practice of the interdict (tne) and, still more, by the magical acts required of a hunter.

Another aspect of this belief is seen in the choice of an animal to represent the mount of the nyana dugu-da-siri.

794 It is for a similar reason that the brotherhoods usually
825 adopt the name of an animal: for the Nama this is usually the hyena (suruku) (3); for the Komo, the hyena (suruku) or the

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3. The hyena is often designated by the words nama-koro (old Nama) or suya-koro (old sorcerer) when the speaker does not want to use the animal's real name (suruku). There is a whole vocabulary for use to "avoid" the names that are dangerous to utter, and the name of the hyena is one of them.

elephant (sama); for the Dyara, the lion; for the Kono, the ostrich (kono-ba), etc. It is said that the cries, the shouts, and

794 The sounds of the [263] trumpets to announce the meetings
825 imitate the cry of the animal (1).

[534]

1. This is true of the Dyara. In the brotherhood of that name, a cry like a roar is drawn from an instrument made as follows: the hollow trunk of a palm tree is covered at one end by a tightly stretched skin; a long thong or rope runs down inside the trunk from the center of the skin; the operator pulls the rope tight, then lets it slip through his hand by jerks, and having achieved a certain facility, he succeeds in producing a noise like a roar.

000 Can it be that the costumes made of bark strips, the strange masks, and the mimicry of the people who wear them are connected with mysteries which are now unknown to us, either because they have been adopted without understanding and thus deformed beyond recognition, or because they are the last vestiges of far older cults, today unfathomable since they no longer exist?

Did Egypt inspire these cults, as some people believe? Or rather was Egypt herself influenced originally by a preexistent Black civilization whose last surviving traces she kept alive by altering them? This is an unlimited field for speculation.

794 Generally speaking, the cult is in abeyance on Monday
805 and Thursday of each week. The same days are holidays from communal work and are left to the "poor people" for their own profit. There must be some connection between these two facts, and it should further be noted that, as a result, the religious week is reduced to five days. A question naturally arises, therefore, as to whether the week as now observed is truly native. It seems likely that the week is an oriental contribution, more specifically Islamic. It could be a coincidence that Islam organized slavery, and when a seven-day week was adopted, two days were allotted to the gens de poëste, as used to be said IN FRANCE;

794 in France. The question is too complex, however, to be treated here.

794 782 For important ceremonies, the faithful bring the nyana-tigi a contribution in proportion to their means; each of them brings grain, livestock, fowl, cowries, cloth, etc., and no one is so poor that he cannot furnish one or more jugs of beer (dlo). Everything thus collected is offered to the nyana at the general meeting of the faithful through the intermediary, the nyana-tigi. In accordance with [264] established ritual, the victims are slaughtered and libations made. Then the nyana-tigi gives thanks to the god and asks him to continue to protect his worshipers. Finally, all or part of the food is eaten at a joint banquet. This is a true communion, by means of which the god and his worshipers on the one hand, and the worshipers among themselves on the other, are closely bound together. These banquets, [786] which often last for several days, degenerate into orgies.

Internal Discipline

794 A result of the cult is that the brotherhood forms an organized body in which each member is subject to a discipline that may be summarized under these three terms: secrecy, obedience, solidarity.

Secrecy is obligatory, especially for anything having to do with the cult. Divulging the mysteries carries with it a [688] punishment which, depending on circumstances, may vary from a simple reprimand to condemnation to death, with fines, flogging, etc., as intermediate forms. People who are known to be unable to keep a secret are, on that account, excluded from the brotherhoods of nyana; this excludes women, children, certain people of caste, etc.

The obedience required of the faithful is shown by the seemingly fantastic rules enforced during the official banquets of certain brotherhoods. Members are fined for very odd infractions: sitting down, getting up, spitting, etc., before being given permission or being asked to do so. This is obviously a means of swelling the common fund, but it is also a means of making the adept realize that he is subservient to the sect.

•794 Besides, this submission, if one may call it that, is merely a corollary of the solidarity existing between nyana-den'. This solidarity is shown to the profane whenever litigation arises outside the sphere of the brotherhood; nyana-den' do not [696] hesitate to bear false witness for the sole purpose of helping a guilty co-member evade the sanctions of profane jurisdiction.

For failure to fulfill his obligations or for any other wrong considered reprehensible by the brotherhood, the nyana-den' comes under the jurisdiction of this brotherhood.

Fearing the supernatural retribution which his misdeeds [783] [265] may provoke and seeing portents of it in apparently inexplicable things that cause him pain and surprise, the nyana-den' himself seeks pardon through some kind of expiation, determined by his own intuition alone or by one of the clergy.

On other occasions, the guilty person fails to denounce himself, not merely by deliberate design but sometimes because [787] he is not aware of his wrongdoing and its consequences. In that case it is the wara-da (oracle) who reveals it in a trance.

794 695 The clergy is led, by means of self-accusation, denunciation by witnesses, or accusations based on the most varied imputations, to learn, to investigate, to adjudicate, and to punish the acts of the faithful in material as well as spiritual matters.' In the process of carrying out its duties in this respect, the clergy uses every imaginable means of obtaining information and of examination, but the proof of guilt that they particularly want is confession.

The various procedures used to persuade the accused to confess his wrongs may be put under three headings: oath, torture, and divination.

When an oath is taken, the boli is provided with an accessory known as the siri-kun' (knot), to which seven straws are attached. The person taking the oath (kali boli la, "to swear on the boli") then pronounces the usual formula: "May the nyana take my heart and my liver if I lie." When two people exchange this oath in order to vouch for their respective statements, they are said to have "tied the boli" (boli syen'), and it is believed that anyone who perjures himself will be put to death

794 by the god. It is conceded, however, that a perjurer may re-
695 deem himself by gifts and sacrifices whose nature and value are decided by the clergy.

Torture includes the most diverse types of moral and physical constraint thought to be efficacious in getting a confession: usually flogging, imprisonment, starvation, mutilation, and other tortures, often horrible. A method that often succeeds and that is commonly used is to offer up the unknown guilty party to the wrath of the nyana; it is not at all rare for the guilty person to confess at the first signs of discomfort due to auto-suggestion. It is so firmly established that the wrath of the nyana is always implacable and terrible that innocent persons, accused only for the sake of exploiting them, have been known to confess abominable crimes which they [266] never committed, for instance, in cases of accusation of sorcery.

[787] Divination comes to the support of the inquiry, and the deity's revelations are combined with endless spying among the members.

It goes without saying that these various methods of inquiry are not used alone; they are combined so as to provide mutual support.

On the basis of findings made in this way, the clergy passes judgment and has the sentence carried out in a despotic and often mysterious manner (1).

> 1. Indeed, most of the brotherhoods owe their terrifying reputations to the fact that sentences resulting in death or disappearance have been carried out by ways and agents who remain mysterious.

794 The penalties are varied and arbitrary; the importance
696 of a misdemeanor is not determined in advance on the basis of specific characteristics. Rather, everything depends on the clergy's interest in the case, and this interest is influenced by the most appalling intrigues. Therefore, even though the accused is guilty of the most terrible crimes, he may escape punishment entirely provided he can satisfy the demands of the

794 clergy. On the other hand, an innocent man will be over-
696 whelmed by mental and physical torture if he is unable to give his executioners what they demand.

681 Corporal punishment includes flogging, chains, starvation, torture, and death by all imaginable methods. Pecuniary punishment includes fines, confiscation, and pillage. The condemned man is also sometimes forced to labor for the clergy or is even enslaved by them.

Social and Political Role of the Brotherhoods

794 By its actions, the brotherhood, an artificial family,
776 tends to take the place of the natural family whose organization
769 it has borrowed and whose cult it has banished. It is easy to account for this.

The cult of the manes is the framework of the family and of the communities derived from it. The brotherhood has cleverly managed to set up such a cult by specially honoring the manes of its high priests, its famous members, and its eminent worshipers. [267]

Gradually, the nyana dugu-da-siri, protector of the territorial community, has given way to the nyana of the boli, a more powerful god since his territory is unlimited.

It is true that in spite of everything the tradition remains, and even though they are largely over-shadowed by the nyana of the boli, the manes of the ancestors and the nyana dugu-da-siri are still venerated. Though sowing and harvesting are celebrated
731 with great pomp by the brotherhoods, still, when a disaster,
783 epidemic, or terrible drought occurs, sacrifices are promptly offered to the manes and the gods of the place. People may fear their anger, but they also have confidence in their good will, and it is felt that their severity can always be tempered. On the other hand, the nyana of the boli are supposed to be basically evil, and their worship seems intended to ward off their malignity rather than to obtain their favor.

794 This duality in religion brings about extremely compli-
621 cated interrelationships which bind the communities and

794 621 brotherhoods together, although the latter seem to dominate the former. These brotherhoods hem in the communities they dominate by abusively extending their jurisdiction far beyond its proper limits. Indeed, the faithful are not the only ones who are subject to the judgments handed down by the brotherhoods, whose clergy make decisions affecting not only members involved but often also third parties in the neighborhood or even people from neighboring or distant regions. The brotherhoods are tyrannical toward their own members and no less so to strangers, who often see no way of escaping persecution short of asking to be received into the ranks.

794 661 182 Thus, it is apparent how a brotherhood increases in size and in power as time passes. Each year it takes in the young people at the end of the soli, and as a result all the communities are at length absorbed by it live in it and for it (1). It

1. The following is a typical example.

[778] In the village of Marenna (Fouladougou Arbala), the natives belong to the cult of Ba-ku. This boli consists of a small sheaf of roots of the indigo tree. For every newborn child the nyana-tigi makes and consecrates a small Ba-ku, which he places in a gourd and puts in the temple of this nyana. At the time of the soli, the child becomes affiliated with the cult, takes the boli placed in the gourd for him at birth and henceforth wears it on his person. All the families in Marenna are thus closely involved in the cult of Ba-ku, being, as it were, engendered by this god to whom each person owes both physical and spiritual birth. Ba-ku comes from Sangaran, and his high priest is a Dyara; that is why he is invoked and called by the expression Ba-ku Dyara Sangaran-ka. The word ba-ku literally means "tail of a

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goat," and, indeed, that describes the appearance of the little bunch of roots. It is possible that the word Ba-ku is merely the profane name and that the real name of the nyana is kept secret.

claims eminent rights over every person or thing it touches, as a consequence of the supernatural power of the nyana protecting them. [268]

So it is that the brotherhood, by what might be called divine right, comes to play a political role which is inconsistent only because it was not designed to play such a role. Let an ambitious man come forth, one who knows how to make use of the organization and its redoubtable power for his own ends, and the brotherhood then becomes the cradle of a veritable political state.

So it is that when the regular authority cannot firmly resist its encroachments, the brotherhood becomes a kind of high judge and uses that high office to establish a reign of terror which exploits the defections due to hatreds its own machinations have aroused and encouraged. This wretched [578] game naturally brings repercussions within the brotherhood itself: the nyana-den' are at each other's throats, and the grimmest dramas accompany the indulgence of the lowest instincts. The chronicle of Ségou bears witness to these facts.

It is, unfortunately, by no means unusual for the established authority to condone these crimes through weakness, interest, or membership in the brotherhood. As a result, innumerable regions have fallen into anarchy.

794 That is why and how the brotherhoods have been the
182 cause of a great deal of unrest in the native milieu. As a refuge
578 for escaped slaves, malcontents, vagabonds, intriguers, in a word, for all enemies of public order, the brotherhoods everywhere set themselves up in opposition to regularly constituted authority, and when they are unable to take it over, seek to thwart it by taking the head into partnership.

The dynastic convulsions of most of the Sudanese empires, especially that of Ségou, are in large part explained by the usurpations of these great brotherhoods of nyana.

794 182 578 The family, too, has been assailed, perverted, [269] and disorganized, because dissident elements found support in the brotherhoods that made it possible for them to combat their "own people" in the communities and sometimes even to bring about their downfall.

Moreover, within the community, they set up the cult of nyana of the boli in opposition to the cult of the manes. In associations of communities, the nyana dugu-da-siri has been gradually abandoned in favor of these imperious and jealous nyana of the boli. Although the latter could not entirely eliminate the former because of their failure to appropriate the rights over the land, they have nevertheless eclipsed it by their all-encompassing authority. So it has come about that nyana of the boli have been created who are honored as protectors of the citizens, although they do not own the soil.

It is remarkable that these destroyers of the natural family always seek to organize themselves as artificial families by taking on certain characteristics of the family: communities of inalienable spiritual and temporal property; communities of the dead and the living; the cult of the manes of the high priests, etc.

It is the secular action of these laboratories of magic that has most strongly shaken the foundations of native society. Only a strong power could contend with them effectively, and such a power has seldom presented itself. Islam has often been their implacable enemy and yet has actually strengthened them by introducing a knowledge of oriental occultism.

3. Some Important Brotherhoods

794 The cult is the essential framework of all the brotherhoods. One must know its principal characteristics in order to understand the organization and operation of any brotherhood. Each nyana has its special cult, characterized by particular traits, of course, but these differences do not change the basic elements in which all cults of nyana resemble each other.

Therefore, although descriptions of all the different cults would no doubt bring out an interesting variety of details,

794 still -- aside from the fact that this would not appreciably alter the broad lines already indicated -- the present state of our knowledge makes it possible to describe in detail only a few great brotherhoods which are widespread among [270] the Bambara with whom we are here concerned; these are based on cults of Komo, Nama, Kore, and Nya.

The Komo

794 173 The Komo is held in particularly high esteem in the Ségou area. According to the accepted legend, the Komo was brought from Mandé country, where it is supposed to have been introduced by El Hadj Moussa. El Hadj Moussa, having failed to obtain pardon for his sins during a visit to Mecca, turned to the study of magic. He obtained the Komo in exchange for a miraculous shirt (dloki) which some sorcerers had woven for him and which had the faculty of growing longer or shorter at the pleasure of its owner (1).

1. Another example of miraculous cloth, in that case a gift of the marabouts of Djenné, is referred to in the chronicle of Ségou in connection with the installation of Bakari, son of Biton (p.).

El Hadj Moussa is also supposed to have brought a no less miraculous canoe from Mecca, which is still preserved in the greatest secrecy in a swamp in the vicinity of Kouri, near Naréna, in Mandé country.

Finally, he brought back many boli. As he was coming up the Niger, some of them fell into the river and were transformed; the n-tigi (silurids or torpedo fish) is thought to be the result of such a transformation. [825]

According to another legend, the Komo was brought from the Orient, not by El Hadj Moussa but by Fa Koli Sissokho, a follower of El Hadj Moussa.

Whatever may be the truth of the matter, the Bambara are convinced that the Komo was brought to Ségou from Mandé

794 173 country and that the Bambara Massa-si, who had fled to Gadiaga, received it, in turn, from one Namori or Nyamori, a former slave who had been initiated into the mysteries of the Koré and who, for that reason, was named Kor-dyuga.

794 778 Over and above the general characteristics already noted, the Komo has the following peculiarities.

It is said that to make it perfect the boli of the Komo requires the body of a degeni, that is, of a very young boy. Thus, the body of the Komo of Tiguini (20 to 40 kilometers from Ségou) is said to be none other than the body of the grandson [271] of its founder. The same thing is said of the boli of the Komo at Kégué in Bani territory.

This boli-den'-fa is equipped with three iron tubes, and the whole thing is called tama gengen-ba (1). There is a horn

1. The term Komo dyoloro, meaning "chain of the Komo," is used in front of the uninitiated. The wara-da, oracle of the Komo, is called dyoloro samana, "he who drags the chain" of the Komo. In the special language of the cult, "sacrificing to the Komo" is expressed by an bi nege son' (we pay homage to the iron).

at the end of one of these tubes, with an opening serving as a mouthpiece. The sound drawn from this trumpet of sorts by the wara-da announces a meeting of the Komo.

The usual accessories accompany the boli-den'-fa: korti, kana, and siri-kun', which we have already mentioned.

[281] When not in use for ceremonies, all this equipment is put into baskets similar to those used to transport cotton. The tama-gengen-ba are wrapped in a tiger skin. A hut with a conical roof, similar to the native huts, serves as a temple and holds all the regalia. It is called the Komo-bon' (hut of the Komo).

793 794 778 When he is on duty, the wara-da, "oracle" of the Komo, is dressed in a special costume consisting of a mask and a cloak. The mask is surmounted by horns and does not cover the face, but rather is affixed to a stick hidden in the folds of the cloak; it goes up and down at the pleasure of the wara-da, who is completely

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794 covered by the cloak made of feathers from guinea fowl and
778 chickens. Beneath this garb, the wara-da performs all sorts of acrobatics. Skillfully manipulating the mask and the cloak during ritual dances, he gives the illusion, in the light of the fires, of a fantastic creature whose cries, transmitted through the horn, terrify even the initiated.

793 In addition to the wara-da, the clergy includes: a
794 Komo-tigi, high priest; some muru-kala-tigi, sacrificers; a da-ro-tigi, porter, who announces and prepares for the meetings; and a Komo-dyeli, herald. There are also student wara-da, called soma-den' (literally, "elder sons" in the special language), who act as assistants, and finally, there are many other auxiliaries who form a cortege with the wara-da when he carries the boli in nocturnal processions. These people are grouped together under the term tie-den' or tigi-den' ("sons of the master" in the special language). Conspicuous among them are the ta-tugu who [272] carry the flaming torches which are so characteristic of the nocturnal processions.

When the wara-da makes known the revelations of the god, he speaks through the tube with the horn. Since he uses the special language and since the tube distorts the sounds, the Komo-tigi must interpret for him. It is the Komo-dyeli who shouts the revelation which echoes through the night.

794 At the time of the two great annual ceremonies, the
796 wara-da takes the boli and the other liturgical equipment to the sacred grove. The Komo-tigi directs the ceremonies. The sacrifices are entrusted to the muru-kala-tigi among whom are to be noted: the one who brings the victim and who, when the ceremony takes place in the temple, leads it across the threshold (1); and the one who removes the victim and carries its body

1. This door is then called nyena-ma don'-da, "entry of the living," in the special language, and the muru-kala-tigi who brings the victim in is called da-kuna-sigi or "master of the fatal (literally 'bitter') door."

794 over the threshold (2). The ceremonies are announced and
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2. Then the door is called su-bo-da, "exit of the corpse," and the sacrificer is called moso-bolo (literally, "woman's hand").

534 accompanied by a strident, wild orchestra made up of drums (denu-ba) which are accompanied by iron instruments, called kinge, consisting of pieces of metal that are struck against each other or shaken to obtain sound from the rings attached to them. The "cry" of the Komo, which the wara-da shouts through his horn, is accompanied by a kind of reed pipe played by his companions.

782 There is nothing unusual about the offerings, sacrifices, or communion. The blood of the victim is used to wash the boli and the priests, as will be described for the Nama.

Processions held at night are always very effective, and they strike terror into the hearts of not only the uninitiated but also the initiated themselves. This long cortege, lighted by the torchbearers who shout and dash about like madmen while the wara-da gives the "cry" of the Komo, makes a very strong impression on everyone who sees or hears it (3). [273]

3. Elsewhere, the Komo meets in the daytime, and in the old days, notably in Bobo country, it was very popular (cf. Binger, Du Niger au golfe de Guinée [From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea], Vol. 1, p. 379, and Monteil, De Saint-Louis à Tripoli par le Tchad [From Saint-Louis to Tripoli via Chad], p. 89). We have already seen that all the officiants in the brotherhood are called dou, "the hidden people," because of the disguises they affect. "The dou are persons ludicrously disguised, wearing clothing on which are sewed bits of da-fou (native

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hemp), palm fibers, and leaves. On their heads they wear a cap or calotte, also made of hemp and surmounted by a yellowish-red wooden crest or a bird's beak, also of wood. There are two holes in the calotte for the eyes. These dou are given free dlo by the populace which makes up their cortege. They wander about the village and fields day and night..." (Binger).

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[796] There is never any cult service or ceremony on Monday or Thursday.

The clergy serves as an administrative council for the property of the Komo-ya (brotherhood of the Komo) in accordance with the general principles already noted. The Komo-tigi of Tiguini, we have been told, is especially famous for respecting the principles which give the treasury of the brotherhood an exclusively fraternal character.

The Komo-ya are mutually independent, and all have experienced the kind of deviations which give rise to political action. The Komo has played a preponderant role in the affairs of the clan of Ségou, as is evident from the chronicle.

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539 Young men are taken into the brotherhood during the harvest festivals. They appear before the circle of initiates, while those present sing:

Da woro-na nana,
Bolo-ko deu da woro-na,
Toro man na ko la-nyini.
Sira bo nin' ye, ko dugu le den',
Sira bo nin' ye ko dugu le sira.

Translation: "The sixth day has come, the sixth day of the newborn (1), and there has been no accident. Let us show the

1. That is, those who have just been born to a new status through the soli or bolo-ko.

TA4 TA6 539 way to this child, the way which the village follows."

One by one they pass before the wara-da who, dressed in full regalia, is supposed to receive their oath. The oracle places the tube with the horn on each boy's head in turn, and the following dialogue takes place:

--Mun' b'i kun' (What is it you have on your head?), asks the oracle.

A kala be n kun' (I have his symbol (2) on my head).[274]

2. Kala, literally, is the cylindrical part of a thing; here, in the special language, it is a way of alluding to the tube with its horn and thus is a kind of symbol of the Komo.

I y'a ye wa (Have you seen it [the Komo])?

Ne m'a ye (No, I have not seen it).

I y'a fo ma min'ye, k'i kun' ti ki' son' n'i bien' ta a k'ifa (If you speak of it to anyone, may it [the Komo] smash your head and may it [the Komo] take your heart and your liver and kill you).

A ka ne fa (May it kill me).

I sirila nyama-n-fu dyala la (You are bound by the bark thong of the nyama) (1).

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1. An allusion to the strips of bark from the nyama tree (Bauhinia reticulata), which make up the common costume for concealing the officiants during the ceremonies. It is simply a way of saying: "Do you agree to join?" And the reply is equivalent to: "Yes, for as long as I shall live."

Ne si sirila a la (My life is bound by this thong).

Ni si m'a fo ma si ye, Komo k'i kisi (If you speak to no one about all this, may the Komo protect you [literally, "save you"]).

A ka ne kisi (May he protect me).

794 For a certain length of time, the new members are kept
796 in seclusion while being instructed by initiates, especially the older ones, who see to it that they learn the songs and dances and become familiar with the special language. It is in the course of this instruction that they are given certain formulas to use for recognition among the komo-den' (sons of the Komo). The following are two examples and by no means the only ones; each Komo-ya has its own formulas, and in addition the adepts of the various Komo-ya are readily inclined to fraternize, especially when they are alone, far from their respective groups. In such cases, the identical principles of their cults bring them together, and they question each other at once:

[539] --E b' a la wa (Are you a member)?

--M ba' la (I am).

--N'i b'a la, tyoko dyira r na (If you are, show me the secret sign).

[201] This sign varies and is completely arbitrary. Sometimes it involves raising the hand with the fingers spread apart in a certain way; at other times, twigs are placed in a special pattern, and so on. [275]

The Nama

794 This cult arose at an unknown date at Missango (Bélédougou). The head of the Nama at Missango is addressed respectfully as Fura-tigi-ba, meaning literally, "grand master of the fura (fura specifically means "leaf" of a tree and, by extension, "remedy"). This is one of the expressions with double meanings which are so common in the brotherhoods: Fura-tigi-ba, the great physician, great savant, grand master.

The Nama is also called Nama-koro and Suya-koro, and a certain Nama is called Siriman 'fin'.

[778] Objects used in worship include: the Nama-kon-golo-u (craniums of the Nama), which are a kind of headdress, usually made of linge wood and shaped like fantastic birds; the wara-se (literally, "foot of the wara"), a small wooden board about a meter high with three horns affixed to it; and a similar board with two horns, called nye-bla.

794 [778] There are, of course, the usual accessories: kana, korti, siri-kun', pottery, bells, horns, and so forth.

Most of these objects are stored in a small hut called Nama-bon', similar to the native huts.

794 778 The ceremonies take place in a grove which is reserved for the purpose. If there appears to be not enough privacy in spite of the dense foliage, or for some other reason, a palisade (dyase) or a few straw mats are put up to form an enclosure. In the special language of this brotherhood, the term for offering a sacrifice to the Nama is dyase son' (literally, "to honor the palisade").

794 The assemblage of the adepts of the same Nama constitute a Nama-ya, Nama brotherhood. Persons who wish to form a Nama-ya appeal to an existing Nama-ya to obtain the secrets or, more accurately, the rules governing the brotherhood: the mysterious words and acts by which the god (wara) is summoned and made amenable to his worshipers; cult objects; organization and role of the clergy and of the common worshipers; the liturgy, etc.

The fundamental ceremony by means of which the priest and his god are united is called furu, "union, marriage," in the special language of the brotherhoods. [276] Once a year, through the furu of the Nama, males and females, the Nama-de-u (spiritual sons of the Nama) are born. Behind this realism, required for the ordinary adept, is there not hidden a profound meaning for the initiate; is not close union with the diety a "spiritual marriage" in all the great religions? Possibly the special language is not intended merely to hide secrets from the prying curiosity of the profane, but is also intended to hide a profound meaning, today unknown to almost all the initiates, but felt and perhaps even known, at least vaguely, by some of them!

793 794 In every Nama-ya there are various functions and ranks, corresponding to different grades of initiation. The grand master, Nama-tigi, is often the person who contributed the most for the expenses of founding the Nama-ya; he directs and watches over the cult and is therefore a feared and formidable personage.

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794 He is assisted by the dye-n-fa-u (masters of truth), among whom those who wear the headdress called Nama-kongolo are the oracles (wara-da) of the Nama. Other assistants have the duty of holding the horned boards (wara-se and nye-bla) during the ceremonies.

One adept serves as factotum under the title da-ro-tigi (master of the entrance) (1).

> 1. During the night when the Nama goes about the village to drive out sorcerers, the da-ro-tigi runs ahead of the dye-n-fa who wear the Nama-kongolo. Shaking his bell, he warns people off the road followed by the dye-n-fa, and he carries a torch to reveal the inquisitive. If he finds any such person, he warns the dye-n-fa in the special language to halt or to change their course. Then he questions the intruder, chases him off with blows, curses him, or, on the contrary, takes him into the group. He is thus truly "the one who guards the entrance," but he is like a concierge rather than a master who agrees or refuses to receive the visitor whom the concierge has admitted. We have pointed out an analogous emphasis in the title of ton'-masa, given to the head of the servants of the ton' even though the term literally means "head of the ton'."

This clergy is recruited by co-optation, and anyone named to it or promoted in it must pay for the privilage. The cleric is even more bound to secrecy than the common worshiper, since any indiscretion on his part would reveal the secrets of the cult.

794 The common adherents or the faithful are called Nama-de-u (children of the Nama), that is, spiritual sons of the Nama, but we shall see that when allusions are made during the ceremonies to a kind of material birth, this is plebeian mythology.

794 In order to be Nama-de, the individual must be approved [277] by the clergy, pay a fee, and promise not to betray in any way the secrets of the brotherhood, never to injure a fellow-member and especially never to testify against him, to contribute to the expenses of the cult by making annual offerings in proportion to his means.

The adepts are legally responsible to the Nama-ya for all their acts. This spiritual family is infinitely more tyrannical than the temporal family since, in order to consolidate its authority, the clergy does not hesitate to use any means even criminal; fines are the most profitable for pecuniary returns. The totality of entrance fees, gifts, offerings, and fines constitutes the treasury of the Nama and hence of the Nama-ya. The Nama-tigi administers it with the help of the council of the dye-n-fa. It is current practice for this clergy to appropriate all the property for its own use. This does not, however, nullify the principle that any unfortunate adept, whatever the reason for his situation, has a right to ask for aid from the common fund on condition that he repay the loan with interest when his situation improves.

This material exploitation of the cult of the Nama can be seen in another form: although not an adept of the Nama, one can obtain its good offices for a price fixed by the clergy. The other means of exploitation, extortion and political deviation, discussed above, are likewise practiced by the Nama-ya.

It is the material role of the Nama-ya which really interests the majority of the natives. It is the showy exhibitions, accompanied by prolonged orgies that are mischievous, which have given the Nama, as well as the Komo, a bad reputation, albeit well deserved.

There is no real hierarchy among the Nama-ya. The Nama-tigi of Missango is held in particular esteem, and, in general, any Nama-ya keeps on good terms with the group that initiated it, but there is nothing like what might be called an archbrotherhood. On the contrary, any Nama-den' certainly has access to any Nama-ya, and this fact makes it likely that, under given circumstances, there may be very widespread solidarity. In the old days it was very useful to be a member of a Nama-ya

794 if one had to travel, since the Dyuola [Diula] and other travelers were at the mercy of the whims and banditry of the [278] Nama-den' (1) and only avoided them to a certain extent by claiming

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1. Cf. Monteil, Binger, op. cit.; at the time of the great annual festivals of the Komo, all trading was halted for several days. Strangers could be sure of being respected only by claiming membership in the brotherhood. The same was true of the Nama.

to be of the Nama-den'. Even Moslems often became adherents of the Nama; all that was required of them was absolute secrecy and a few gifts in exchange for the secret passwords.

794 There are two great annual ceremonies: one at planting and the other at harvest, the dates for both decided by the 796 Nama-tigi and his council. Each of them involves offerings, 782 sacrifice, communion, and a nocturnal procession. Young members are usually admitted at the harvest ceremony.

The initiates gather for the sacrifice before the temple (Nama-bon'). Only the Nama-tigi and his clergy may enter the sacred place; the common worshipers remain outside. The sacrificial animals are brought up. Two sacrificers (muru-kala-tigi), naked to the waist, stretch their arms toward the four cardinal points and spit three times in each direction. Two dye-n-fa, also naked to the waist, hold the pieces of wood bearing horns and face the faithful. Three times the sacrificers utter the cry, "ture-dyo," twice alternating this cry with another, "dyo-Nama." They invoke the god two times, and then they slaughter the victims, sometimes inside the temple and sometimes outside.

The blood is carefully collected in receptacles, and the ashes of straw are added to it. All the cult objects, especially the boli itself, are smeared with the mixture. The Nama-tigi and the other principal initiates remove their clothing to anoint themselves with the same mixture and do not put on their garments again until the blood has dried on their bodies.

794 796 The food is eaten by those attending the ceremony; the millet mush which constitutes the meal is supposed to have been prepared by the wives of the dignitaries. This communion is the most important act of the ceremony.

When night comes, the procession of the Nama takes place. Its aim is to rid the village and its environs of sorcerers, the eaters of souls known as [279] suba (1), and to discover and

1 See Chapter 7 below. [Not translated.]

destroy the objects called siri which bear witness to the measures taken by the sorcerers to harm the natives.

The ritual cries of ture-dyo and dyo-Nama break into the racket of trumpets and drums while the Nama wanders about. The dye-n-fa, wearing the symbolic headdress (Nama-kongolo) and preceded by the da-ro-tigi tinkling his bell to warn people to clear the way, is followed or surrounded by torchbearers (called ta-tugula-n-tigi) who shout a hymn in praise of the god.

[539]

A dyigina so Nama fambali: He is our host, mighty Nama.
A fyerela ka den': He blossoms in order to bear fruit.
Suba yo, nin kera malo-ko ye: Oh! Suba (2), shame on you!"

2. Literally, the "bonds" (see Chapter 7 below). [Not translated]

One of the persons in his entourage shouts defiance and curses in all directions, aimed at the suba, the eaters of souls.

It is during this procession that the dye-n-fa, at the instigation of the bearer of the symbol, discover the siri-fen' (2) [Ed., see footnote 2 above]; these are the objects used by the eaters of souls to accomplish their sinister designs or are the remains of their macabre repasts. Here it is a knife, there a pot, elsewhere a bit of human flesh (or so it is claimed)! All these things are dug up amidst cries, exclamations, and imprecations by the whole company.

A suba discovered in the course of these proceedings is hotly pursued, and it is said that, exhausted by the chase and

overpowered by the god, he always comes to die near the temple. When this happens, the wretch's corpse is left there, naked; his clothing is thrown to the roof of the temple where it remains for a long time as an example. The siri-fen' are also displayed near the temple, within sight of the women, who are allowed to come and look at them.

It is just prior to these solemn sorties of the Nama that the clergy begins the proceedings to admit the youths who have just completed the soli. In the center of a circle of the faithful in front of the temple, they take their oath of secrecy:

--I y'a fo ma min' ye, boli k'i son' ta, k'i been'ta, ka [280] dun' i dyu fe'ka bo i da fe: If you speak to anyone, may the boli take your heart and your liver, may he go in through your anus and go out through your mouth.

--O ka ke: Let it be so.

-- Ni e ma fo ma ye, k'i kisi suba-u ma k'i son' si la, k'i son' keneya la: If you tell no one, may he protect you from the suba, grant you descendants, and give you good health.

-- O ka ke: Let it be so.

The new members must pay an entrance fee of a franc and ten kola nuts and must go through a kind of initiation. For a fortnight they live apart under supervision and are required to learn the songs and dances under the tutelage of the clergy and [198] old men. They are told the significance of the words with double meanings, which constitute the language peculiar to the brotherhood, and are also given the formula of recognition, of which the following are some examples:

-- E b'a la wa? (Are you one of us?)

-- Ne b'a la (I am).

-- Fere tyon' kan' (Show the sign).

He shows it and explains it. The questioner then concludes:

--Dya! e b'a la, kol (You are indeed one of us)!

794

The Kore (1)

1. One also hears "Kote" and, in the Bani region, "Kwere." It should be noted that these three words, Kore, Kote, and Kwere, all have an ending which is frequently found in Soninké but not in Bambara.

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The Kore is particularly popular in the Bani region, that is to say, the riverine area of this tributary of the Niger, in the part that is on a line with Ségou.

This brotherhood has the peculiarity of having a cult which honors the three divinities always worshiped by the Bambara: the manes, the god of the soil, and the nyana of the boli. Therefore the site of the brotherhood is the chosen site of the god of the soil, usually a tree within a grove (Kore-tu, "grove of the Kore") near the village. A kara, that is, the little board symbolic of the dead, and a suŋku-kongolo (skull of a hyena), the boli of the Kore and for that reason called the Kore-kongolo (skull of the Kore), are kept here.

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The clergy and its assistants form a large body of personnel that includes all of the faithful. [281]

In addition to the high priest, Kore-tigi, there are the "people of the kara" (kara-ma-u) and the persons who wear masks, called wara-u (1) (wild beasts) or sogo-u (savage animals),

1. The terms wara or sogo are usually applied to all those who have some function, from the suruku to the ngoni-sama.

among whom are hyenas (suruku), lions (dyara), and monkeys (sûba). The persons in costume, called Kor'dyuga (2), are for the

2. The term seems to come from the Soninké language: Kore yugo or Kor'-dyuga, "man of the Kore." The expression Koré[illegible]ga-tigi is a corruption

794 of Kore-dyuga-tigi and has the same meaning.

[301] most part strangely accoutered dancers, each of whom dresses as his fancy dictates. As ornaments, the Kor'dyuga wear strings of beautiful red beans, which are inedible, called n-go ble. These beans are about the size of a large dragée and throughout the western Sudan are used as protection against evil spirits.

[292] These dancers have a leader, the Koro-duga-tigi or Kor'dyuga-tigi, who is further distinguished by a kind of cloak made entirely of bits of reed stalks. On his head he wears a conical hat made of the same reeds, and in his hand he carries a long wand from which hang birds' skulls, packets of sorghum straw, gourd stems, etc. In addition to the dancers, the clergy is accompanied by

[785] flagellants (bisa-tyi-la), torchbearers (ta-tugu-la-n-tigi), and people who lash themselves with bundles of thorns (the ngoni-sa-ma-u).

[534] Of course, the Kore has its orchestra, which includes drums (denu-ba), a kind of castanet (kinge), and gourds filled with seeds or pebbles (nkude) and pierced with holes.

794 The cult has the usual ceremonies, with the two great festivals at the times of planting and harvesting. On these oc-

796 casions the Kore-tigi officiates, as the nyana-n-son-na-ba does with respect to nyana dugu-da-siri. He makes the offerings, performs the sacrifices, and sets forth the requests at the foot of the sacred tree, after having thanked the god-protector. The kara and the Kore-kongolo are sprinkled with the blood of the victims; thus, the manes and the nyana of the boli are honored simultaneously.

[764] There is always a meeting of the brotherhood when a Kore-de dies. There are offerings, sacrifices, and communion with all the offerings, which require one or more days of orgies to be consumed, depending on the importance of the deceased, because elders in [282] important posts like that of nyana-n-son-na-ba, etc., are particularly honored at their death.

Young men are admitted only once every seven years, and it is at this time that the ceremonies are most elaborate.

794 At dusk on the day selected, the clergy proceeds with the great-
796 est pomp to the Kore-tu (grove of the Kore). The orchestra, composed of drums (denu-ba), bells (kinge), and gourds (nkude), leads the procession. Then come the high priest (Kore-tigi) and the kara-ma, "people of the plank of the dead" (kara), which one of them carries. Finally comes the dense crowd, motley and noisy, of wara-u, Kor-dyuga, bisa-tyi-la, ta-tugu-la-n-tigi, and ngoni-sa-ma.

Everyone is performing his role. The masked men imitate the beasts they represent; the costumed Kor'dyuga act like clowns; the flagellants make their switches hiss. Thus the crowd approaches the Kore-tu amidst a great din, but only the clergy may enter it. The bearer of the kara takes his place under the sacred tree. On orders from the Kore-tigi, silence falls for the reception of the Kore-de postulants.

[516] The latter form a line facing the tree and the kara. They prostrate themselves in the dust for the duration of the sacred hymn of the Kore, which begins with the words, "Dyante Kore de-u." When they rise, they are dyante-ma-u, "affiliates."

The members thus admitted remain in the sacred grove for 15 days and are not allowed to return to the village. There they are instructed by the "elders." Then they are assigned to the different groups of wara; theoretically, an eldest son enters the group to which his father belongs, while the rest of the sons may choose whichever group they prefer. In addition to his duties during ceremonies, each wara has a certain job: the hyenas (suruku) guard and patrol the sacred grove and question the inquisitive to learn whether they are members (dyante ma); the Kore-duga see to the maintenance of the grove, clearing its environs in order to guard against the grove's being damaged by brush fires.

794 The offerings and the sacrifices, and then the communion
796 repast, follow the ceremony of admission and are accompanied
786 and followed by dancing and singing. The orgy then goes on for several days, as long as food remains. The various groups assemble for their dances, and the ta-tugu-la-n-tigi start the proceedings. With a flaming torch [283] in each hand, they chase each other, singe each other's backs and chests, and in the

794 process, let loose a rain of sparks which the Kore-duga zealously
796 put out with leafy branches. Then each dancer, carrying what
786 is left of his torch, kneels before the drums, making an obscene gesture which arouses the laughter of the onlookers and giving the cries, roars, or laugh of the "wild beasts." Elsewhere, the nyoni-sa-ma are roaming among the drinkers, tearing at themselves with thorns. Flagellants lash themselves with switches
[785] that leave cuts from which the blood flows. They stiffen themselves against the pain and keep up this cruel sport, which once again the Kore-duga mitigate by binding up the wounds.

There appears to be no doubt that during these orgies the most shameful excesses are committed without the slightest restraint.

The Nya

794 This brotherhood is highly esteemed in all the Bambara villages in the cantons of Say and Karadougou. It is less common in the canton of Séladougou; in the canton of Saro, five-sixths of the villages are loyal to it. It is rarely found in Nyansannari, and outside these areas in the circle of Djenné, there are only a few scattered Nya brotherhoods in the Bendougou and Ségou areas.

The cult arose in the Bendougou region. As has been
[443] noted above, the villages of Moribala, Kourbadougou, Diali, etc., are market villages where all the boli are found, together with directions for using them.

778 The boli of the Nya consists of a piece of wood from 25
794 to 30 centimeters in length and from 10 to 15 centimeters in height and width. It is wrapped in an absorbent material, usually cotton. The blood of the victims and the liquid of the libations are poured on this boli, and then hairs or feathers and bits of entrails, eggs, and kola nuts are stuck to it, giving it a
[281] repulsive appearance. It is true that the boli is often concealed from inquisitive eyes by putting it in a container made of an old piece of the hide of a she-goat. However, since the container is given the same treatment as the boli it contains, it is just as disgusting.

794 This boli-den'-fa is provided with the usual boli-de: [778] kana, korti, siri-kun', etc. [284]

[346] A hut with a conical roof serves as temple (Nya-bon'). An orchestra accompanies the ceremonies; it includes [534] a kind of harp, made by the natives and peculiar to the Nya, plus large numbers of the usual drums, bells, and trumpets.

Since the Nya is acquired by purchase, the high priest (Nya-tigi) is theoretically the person who contributed most generously to this purchase. The office may also be attained by inheritance or by election. The truly religious role, however, is that of the wara-mina-den', the medium through which the god reveals his will or his desires and who is, therefore, the oracle (wara-da) of the Nya. A certain amount of training by appropriate methods is necessary to acquire the degree of extra-lucidity claimed by the wara-mina-den', and that is why they are recruited by co-optation.

794 787 Under the influence of the Nya, the wara-mina-den' falls into a trance. His speech, hesitant and strange, is incomprehensible to the common people. The Nya-tigi then approaches to receive and to interpret the oracle. The inspiration of the wara-mina-den' may be spontaneous or it may be provoked and deliberately sought by him. For example, when a person dies, the wara-mina-den' questions the Nya, either at the request of the interested parties or of his own volition. For this purpose, he retires to the temple (Nya-bon'), concentrates on the point to be clarified, and after meditating, withdraws (1). He then sometimes

1. These details were given to me by a wara-mina-den' of Soun-Bambara.

falls asleep, and while he sleeps, the Nya reveals the truth to him in a dream. On other occasions the wara-mina-den' falls into a trance, and the spirit speaks through his mouth. One way or another, it is learned whether the death is to be attributed to the Nya and, if so, why. Or it is made plain that it is the work of the suba and under what form, human or otherwise, they are hiding. Or, finally, it is learned whether some other nyana struck down the deceased.

794 [787] Furthermore, every wara-mina-den' is able to read the will of the Nya and, more generally, to reveal the acts of the invisible by means of the divination practices which we have already mentioned.

[782] The sacrifices are performed by the muru-kala-tigi, and a dyeli (herald) serves as factotum, just as in the other brotherhoods. [285]

794 796 The faithful are initiated and called to participate in the cult to an extent determined by the clergy; they are called Nya-ko-den'-u, literally, "those who follow the Nya." In order to be admitted, an individual must give a chicken and 120 cowries. The next day, in the presence of the Nya-tigi and the wara-mina-den', the chicken is sacrificed on the boli by the muru-kala-tigi. The candidate is present, and in his behalf the Nya-tigi asks the Nya for protection against the suba, snakes, korti, and the evil eye. Then the neophyte is led to the sacred grove to be ritually purified with consecrated water contained in a vessel used exclusively for this purpose (1).

[783] 1. Every year at the time of harvest, the clergy undergoes ritual purification by washing in the sacred water. When a Nya is inaugurated, this purification takes place at the first harvest after the installation.

[731] The two great annual festivals are celebrated at the times of planting and harvesting. Similar ceremonies take place in connection with important events (epidemics, public catastrophes, etc.). For these ceremonies, during which the Nya is supposed to give revelations about the event in question and to answer various other questions troubling the faithful, the wara-mina-den' [273] undergo special preparation and at the proper time drink a very heady beverage (2) which, they say, brings on their extra-lucidity.

[691] 2. I learned most of these details about the Nya during a criminal trial brought against the wara-mina-den' of Soun-Bambara,

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[691]

near Djenné. The son of the chief of that village drank the special liquid, in spite of the fact that the wara-mina-den' had told him not to do so, and died. The latter was accused of having poisoned him, but when he explained the circumstances before the native tribunal, he was acquitted.

It is said that this drink is made by soaking any sort of root found while digging graves and seasoning it with pepper, salt, and red peppers. The beverage, which is highly intoxicating, is ritually consecrated.

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796 Excited by this beverage and by the songs and dances of a crowd which is itself warmed with drink, the wara-mina-den' during major festivals acts as a visionary who freely reveals the will and desires of the god. On the evening before these important ceremonies and for several evenings before that, all the clergy and their aides meet for a kind of rehearsal of the dances and songs. It is then that the young men prepare for the major roles they will later play. The [286] wara-mina-den' is particularly concerned with the training of the man who will replace him in case of need.

There is nothing of special interest to note about the brotherhood's treasury, which is acquired and appropriated just as in other brotherhoods. The political action of the Nya and its relations with the communities are also such that they require no special attention. [287]

Chapter 5

The Clans

1. General Considerations

631 It is usual to use the word "empire" or "kingdom" to describe the form of government of most of the Sudanese states and particularly those founded in Kaarta and Ségou by the

Relations between the Elements of the Clan

614 596 A study of the clan of Ségou is fortunately clarified by comparison with the organizations which we have discussed earlier: communities and brotherhoods. [306]

The influence of the community and the brotherhood on the clan is clearly shown by the two traits which reveal the consistent effort made by the fama to fuse the clan with his own patriarchy. First, there is the connection of the important ton'-dyon' chiefs and, through them, of all of the furu-dyon' to the fama. This is achieved by placing each of these dyon'-kuntigi under the patronage of an influential member of that patriarchy. Under Mamari and Ngolo, for instance, each of these dyon'-kuntigi was attached to the mother, wife, son, or brother of the fama. The ton'-masa himself asked to be put under the protection of Bakari, son of Mamari.

[794] From another viewpoint, the liaison between the clan and the patriarchy of the fama is made even closer by the participation of the ton'-dyon' in the personal cults of Mamari. Some of them were leading officients of the cults; it was precisely this circumstance that enabled Ngolo to dominate his companions.

It is therefore not too rash to state that under these conditions the clan is merely a kind of extension of the patriarchy of the fama. Besides, the ton'-dyon' always made a point of the bonds which in so many ways linked them to Mamari and which established a real brotherhood between them. That is why, first of all, their cult honored Mamari as though he were an ancestor. Secondly, it was the reason for the mode of succession which was imposed during periods of anarchy, bringing to power the man longest in Mamari's service. Finally, for the same reason, when the fama dies, the ceremonies are exactly like those for a patriarch.

614 There is another consequence: the prosperity, the power, and even the existence of the clan depend essentially on the personal qualities of the fama. When he is equal to the task, the clan is rich and powerful. If he lacks authority or is unable to assign each member a position and a role and keep him there, opposition will at once arise. By its very nature, such opposition inevitably separates the elements that go to make up the clan,

614 between Ségou-koro and Kirango was the area under what we
631 would call direct administration, because this zone was occupied substantially by the fama, his community, and his ton'-dyon'.

614 Ségou-koro, which had witnessed the birth and the de-
velopment of the clan, had remained Mamari's capital; he pre-
794 ferred to live there, and he had installed the protective idols of the clan there. Thus it was, so to speak, the seat of the brother-
778 hood, whose four principal idols continued to be known under the
776 names of ba Kongo-ba, na n-Golo ko, Nye-dinge-dun', and Kolo-koloni. [319]

The fama was the high priest, and the other officiants of the cult were chosen from among the ton'-dyon'; that is why Ngolo Dyara was dye-n-fa. Any follower of Mamari or his successors was affiliated with the cult of these idols. The adepts who lived far from Ségou-koro founded branches which in certain ways were so dependent on the capital that Ségou-koro was for a long time regarded as a holy city.

We have no detailed knowledge concerning the cult of these important idols; we only know that in general they did not differ greatly from what we have already said about the nyana of the boli. The annual festival was exceptionally solemn and brought the faithful from even quite distant regions. The fama, of course, presided over the ceremony which involved certain essential rites: a renewal of religious faith, the reception of new
614 members, and an oath of loyalty to the fama.

794 The four deities mentioned above were not the only ones
776 in the Bambara pantheon at Ségou (1); others were added, some

1. In Les Bambara [The Bambara], Father Henry mentions, in addition to ba Kongo-ba and na-n-Golo-ko, two other idols, Kuantara and Safolo.

bought and others invented out of the extravagant faith of the ton'-dyon'. Among the latter should no doubt be included the drums of the ton'-dyon', which are mentioned several times in the accounts and which are presented always in a very bloodthirsty light. Ngolo sacrificed his most hated enemies to the drum-idols,

beginning with his relatives, to avenge his hatred toward them for selling him into slavery. It seems likely that the establishment of these ferocious deities may well date from the time of this despot and perhaps was due to his personal initiative.

The "people of Ségou" also held in high esteem the deities of the people they conquered. Indeed, there is no doubt that they constituted the most precious part of the booty of war. The Toucouleur [Tukolor] relate that when they entered Ségou-Sikoro they found an idol in chains; it was the protective deity of a group of the Nono-n-kobe people of the cliff of Bandiagara. With the evident intention of keeping this conquered people forever enslaved, the Bambara had captured their god and were having its cult observed by its own priest, kept captive likewise for the purpose (2). [320]

2. See Desplagnes, Le plateau central nigérien [The Nigerian Central Plateau], p. 175.

The chronicle shows that the Komo also figured in the Ségou pantheon, and if one refers to what we have said about this brotherhood, he will understand the important role it played in the to-da since the fama himself acted as Komo-tigi.

There is absolutely no doubt that cannibalism was in favor on certain definite occasions and, according to appropriate, ritual, especially, at the time of the election of a fama. It is obvious, in any case, that under the despotic rule of the clan human life had little value. The atrocities of Dékoro, the passiveness of his victims, the help given him in the execution of his worst crimes by the very people who were directly threatened -- these are not isolated cases. They are indicative of the basic Sudanese temperament in general, which, if not innate, at least is affected by a very ancient atavism. It is because this kind of arbitrary command over the lives of individuals has been practiced for so many centuries that the Bambara often remain impassive in the face of death. They consider its unforeseen occurrence, even when sudden and the result of man's

614 794 761 own action, as a possible daily eventuality which should cause no surprise.

The practice of this implacable ferocity must also be considered the natural source of that kind of burning faith, as intransigent as it is horrible in our eyes, which is capable of nullifying all the feelings of affection that we regard as natural. When Ngolo realized that he had aroused dangerous ambitions in his son Ntyi, he decided that he could not escape the danger he himself had created except by a sacrifice in keeping with the contingency, and with his own hand and without hesitation, he sacrificed Ntyi's son, his own grandson.

Stubborn Bambara are often heard to say: "You may kill me; I will not yield." Tyitya's resistance shows that this is no idle boast; this same affair also shows the aspiration toward equality, so basic in the Bambara, which makes it impossible for him to bow before his fellows. Another example of the same quality is to be seen in the resistance of the "elders" whom Mamari, even he, could subdue only by murder.

794 614 769 To complete the description of the somewhat mystical features of the clan of "those of Ségou," let us recall that after [321] Mamari's death he was honored by a cult: on the part of his natural descendants because he had been their fa; on the part of the people of the clan because he had been fama; and finally, on the part of the faithful of the idols' cult because he had been the high priest. Under this aegis there was a fusion of sorts of all the people who recognized mutual bonds because they were all spiritual sons of Mamari. This relationship was the excuse used by the ton'-dyon' when they usurped supreme power, and the right of the leaders of the ton'-dyon' to succeed to the office of fama was in fact settled by the expedient of treating this relationship as though it were true descent. This cult took its characteristics from the cult of the idols. When Tonmassa began his duties [782] as high priest, his first act was to honor the manes of Mamari, and the offering was the same as that always made to ba Kongo-ba when a new fama was elected: a man and an ox.

614 794 Such are some of the characteristics of the faith that united the "people of Ségou" by ties which, without metaphor, can be called bloody. It is true, of course, that the clan's

614 leading men made use of the cults to realize their ambitious
● 794 designs and to gratify their personal hatreds. From that point of view it can indeed be said that religion was a means of domination. It would be altogether too simple, however, to say that these cults had no other reason for existence than to maintain terror as the basis of the power of the fama. Any such facile opinion should be discarded, because the facts should be evaluated, not from the outside, but rather in the native milieu. It then certainly appears possible that they are of the same order as the many phenomena already examined.

This powerful religious focus animated the whole clan. Impetus, direction and control belonged to the fama, whose role was conditioned, as we have seen, by the attitudes of the furu-ba dyon' and especially of the ton'-dyon', both of which were represented by the dyon'-kuntigi who were, in a sense, their agents. Was it not inevitable that there should be a kind of spiritual current, supposedly emanating from the idols, which inspired the fama and the furu-ba dyon' and then returned to the idols in the form of a cult? How could such a constant preoccupation with the supernatural not make a deep impression? This preoccupation haunts the natives everywhere and always, [322] and they express it in ways that are in perfect harmony with their world, however ridiculous they may appear to European logic and reason.

614 The Ségou area acquired special importance because of
621 the presence of the community of the fama, which settled there under remarkable circumstances.

It is usual in any important community for the first-born son to be set apart. Destined to succeed the fa upon his death, he is prepared for his future responsibilities by being given the management of a portion of the joint property. As the fa grows older, the role and the importance of this eldest son increase.

*173 When a community is sufficiently wealthy, a privileged
614 position is likewise given to the eldest sons of the other wives of the fa, because he is always forced to distribute favors equally among his various wives whose jealousy may have far-reaching effects. Upon the death of a fa, many difficulties arise, stemming from his all too obvious preferences. An example of this was the

782 The blood sacrifice is the basic element of the rites. The
778 technique used for it has been described by M. Griaule (2). The

2. M. Griaule, "Remarques sur le mécanisme du sacrifice Dogon (Soudan français)" [Remarks on Sacrificial Techniques of the Dogon (French Sudan)], Extract from the Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. X, 1940.

Bambara have three types of altars: the wooden stumps called pembele, altars made of roughly hewn stone, which generally represent the ancestors; and the Nyama or boli, man-made objects representing the parts of the universe.

794 The cults can be individual and familial or general for the whole village, such as the dasiri and the dangu. They are organized by religious societies, dyo, whose object is to conserve the spiritual forces of their members. For the men, these societies are: the Komo (principally), the Kworé, the Nama, the Kono, the Nago, the Nya. The women are also grouped in dyo, as yet little known, while the uncircumcised are members of the N'Domo.

The Komo is a hierarchical society whose members have obligations and taboos, such as initiation for future dignitaries of the political and religious society, study of traditions and practices of the cult, study of the science of magic and religious formulas, fabrication and consecration of protective charms (boli-w, dyo-w), knowledge of [85] poisons and antidotes, procedures for combating enemies and sorcerers.

794 Its moral authority is very widespread, and we shall see the
796 role it plays in justice and public affairs. The Komo has obligatory seasonal ceremonies, such as the festival of the cleaning of the sacred wood by the tinto-w (most recent initiates), the festival of the emergence of the komo-sen-w from the stream, that of stream fishing and of hunting on the banks at the end of the dry season, and, finally, that of the solemn return of the komo-sen-w to the stream. In addition, every seven years, a great celebration in April-May lasts for 15 days, with a sacrifice to the komo-ba. The ceremony ends with
[764] the nomination of a new komo-tigi (chief of the Komo), who will exercise his priesthood for seven years. He must die at the end of

that period; his body will not be buried but will be carried off by members of the Komo, who will take it to a crossroads and crush it with the aid of komo-se-w [sic]. The remains will be hidden in a secret place. The same treatment is accorded to the komo-tigi who dies during his seven-year term.

The cult is cantonal, and the various komo-tigi take their orders from their colleagues of the capital. The cult formerly was interican and intertribal. Labouret (Les Mandingues et leur langue [The Mandingo and Their Language]) has made a table of the seven categories of persons who make up the hierarchical society of the initiates.

After initiation into the Komo cult, a natural sequel to circumcision, the young man may, if he so desires, be initiated into other cults. He then enters a powerful spiritual family which unites all its members by ties of brotherhood. This brotherhood is superimposed on the normal social hierarchy of the flã-tõ [this term is probably the same as flanton]. The chief of the brotherhood is entitled nyama-tigi; he is generally a man of caste or a slave. He acquires his position as chief either by inheriting it, by election, or by founding a new cult. To do this latter, he must buy an altar, gna, from the village or from the brotherhood that already possesses this cult. Such a purchase is considered a marriage with the gna and is accompanied by drinking. The higher-ranking initiates (dyenfaw: masters of the truth) are auxiliaries of the nyama-tigi and participate in the oracle, wara-da. All the initiates are more or less divine. The clergy includes, in addition, a sacrificer, muru-kala-tigi, and a dyeli, herald of the god. To become one of the faithful, one must pay an entrance fee and swear an oath of secrecy, obedience, and fellowship. The clergy manages the cult's treasury which is fed by the entrance fees to the brotherhood, by fees levied for a class promotion, by contributions required for the major ceremonies, and by fines imposed on the members.

The brotherhood is a spiritual family which is organized in a fashion similar to the natural filiation of the community. The nyama-tigi plays the role of the fa; the dyen-fa-w and the notable members form a sort of council for settling, with the chief, all questions. The cult does nothing on Mondays and Thursdays, the work holidays.

794 A strict internal discipline regulates the members' conduct; this discipline is founded on secrecy, obedience, and speed in carrying out orders. An accused confesses [86] his faults under the effect of the oath, torture, or divination, and the punishments are determined according to the seriousness of the offense in the eyes of the clergy. These punishments are corporal (flogging, confinement in irons, deprivation of food, death) or pecuniary (fines, confiscation); they may include forced labor for the benefit of the clergy. We shall see further on the social and political role these brotherhoods play in Bambara life.

794 796 The Kworé society carries out the rites concerning the sky, space, the cardinal points, and the atmospheric manifestations of Faro, notably rain. The ceremonies generally take place around a tree, the kworé-jigi, situated to the east of the village. The altars are placed either in the brush, in the chief's house, or near the village. The society owns a field of small millet which is reserved to meet the needs of the cult.

[793] The n'Domo includes all the non-circumcised. Heading it is the chief, assisted by a sacrificer, muru-kala-tigi, and by a master of ceremonies, dyoloko-tigi. The society is divided into five grades, corresponding to the five fundamental altars; the initiate advances a grade each year. The society possesses a mask, a whip, and five musical instruments. An annual ceremony takes place after the harvest and includes a blood sacrifice and a ritual fight, followed by a new initiation. The society also owns a ritual field cultivated by its members.

[776] The Nama brotherhood (Nama, "hyena" in Mandé) plays an important role in the Ségou region. Nama is the god of the incomplete, the unique god, whose annual ceremonies at sowing time and harvest time are observed by the men and women together.

794 The society of Kono, whose hut is situated in the middle of the village, must also be mentioned, as well as those of Dyo, an old divinity, Nia or Gnã, Wara, and Duga.

To all of these societies, which have been described by Tauxier, Monteil, G. Dieterlen, etc., must be added the women's societies, still imperfectly known but very powerful and particularly feared by the men. The principal female dyo in the Bamako region are: the Niagua, the Kulukutu, and the Jide which assembles its initiates on Mondays and Fridays.

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881
794 The society of n'Domo has the task of preparing children for circumcision; the wanzo of the child liberated by the operation goes in the mask of the n'Domo.

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304 Formerly, circumcision took place between 18 and 20 years of age, and the circumcised had to bear arms the following year. At present, the children are circumcised between 8 and 16 years of
[561] age, but all those of the same promotion are considered to belong to the same age class and are flani [sic] (twins) all their lives.

The ritual of circumcision has been described many times, in particular by Tauxier and G. Dieterlen. Therefore we will only report the essential phases.

The ceremony takes place during the dry season, in bountiful years after the harvest. The appearance of the constellation "Sigi-lolo" is watched for at a certain point in the sky, and when it is very brilliant, the date is fixed. The operation cannot take place except every three years.

The parents prepare for the ceremony long in advance: they make the child a bonnet of white cloth which they present to the Niger, and they make the signs representing the person of the child with earth from the river. Some days before the operation, the child enters into a period of seclusion; he is placed under the protection of the purifying light of Faro and receives gifts (cowries, food ....).

When the day arrives, his hair is shaved off. His mother washes his shaft with water in which an iron axe has been soaked, then has him eat a plate of rice.

The blacksmith prepares his knife, boloko kumba moru, which is enclosed in an iron sheath, this knife represents the circumcised and the prepuce which will be taken from him. The priest washes the handle and, symbolically, the penis. Then with coal or with millet paste he traces the blade with ritual designs symbolizing the three first circumcised men, the four first excised women, and the bird which is the avatar of the eight ancestral blacksmiths. Next, he ties the prepuce with a small cord (drawn on the middle of the blade) and places it on the pembelé. The cutting knife is hit with a small block of wood, and the blacksmith then traces the scarifications on the shaft. The circumcised bleed in a circle on the ground, in individual holes [92] dug between their legs. They thus deliver the wanzo to the impure earth, while the circumciser recites the prayers. Then they apply a dressing of bloody earth to the wound,

and the member is held up by a split millet stalk. The prepuces are buried, and their white bonnets are put on the circumcised. The place of the operation is forbidden to women and to the non-circumcised who could take the liberated wanzo.

In the Bamako region the blood of the oldest is gathered in two new calabashes, which are later broken and the pieces used to make sistrums, sinzin.

After the ceremony, the children retire for three months under the direction of a priest of the Komo. During this period, when they receive a religious and technical education, they enter the village only to sleep in a special house and to repair the roofs of their teachers' huts.

The night before the sixth day after the operation, they are initiated in the Komo. The next day they are led to the river where they wash their wound. Meals are taken together, followed by songs and dances, until they are healed. The last day, the sistrums, sticks, mats, and everything that has been in contact with the circumcised are put in a pile and burned. Each child jumps over the fire three times and runs home, without turning around, to lose his wanzo definitively. In the Bamako region the sistrums are preserved in the cabin of the village chief and will be used for the children of the following years. The bonnet is returned to the mother and will be preserved until death. The next day the child puts on his new clothes.

Let us note that for the circumcision of twins all the offerings for the ceremony and the sacrifices must be doubled, and each child will possess two sistrums. Finally, the albinos today are sent to the dispensary, because the blacksmiths are afraid to operate on them, their wanzo being particularly dangerous.

Circumcision may take place posthumously. The circumciser then cuts the left ear of the body, since the wanzo freed by death would be dangerous to the living.

Generally, a sort of ceremony of confirmation of membership in the Komo takes place in the year following the circumcision.

d. Excision

The excision of the girls has a meaning equivalent to that of the circumcision of the boys. The operation frees them of the physical male factor residing in the clitoris.

761 principles of the cadaver on altars or masks in order to preserve them
764 for the community.

The rites have undergone an evolution. Formerly the bodies
764 were hung from trees until they rotted, while the bones were kept. At present the bodies are buried. Only a band of cotton symbolizing the tongue of the deceased, that is, his word, is attached to the
● [764] branch of a tree. If the deceased was an initiate of the Komo, the society plays an important role in the funeral rites.

All these rites have been studied by G. Dieterlen and Tauxier.
766 Monteil has described at great length the funeral ceremonies of a chief: the three rifle shots recalling his combats, the lamentations of the women, the notification of the village notables, the offerings of relatives and friends, the alms at the crossroads, and finally, the inhumation. The body is prepared, the head shaved, the interior cleaned with water and salt. A paste of water and ground cowry is put into the body openings (the ground cowries possess a divine spirit assuring the preservation of the cadaver). The body, and particularly the head, is daubed with this same paste, then the body is laid on its right side, feet to the north (a woman would be laid on her left side). Finally, the funeral celebration takes place, with the ritual feast
765 and the purifications. Seven days later the celebration of commemoration (Sangha) takes place, followed by the mourning of the women for forty days. After this time the deceased is transformed into a living ancestor.

763 The Bambara receive omens of their death or of a chief's death from certain signs given them in the bush, such as coming across a chameleon on a red anthill, the cry of a certain mythical hyena, the passing of certain crying monkeys or certain birds.

Certain gifted beings have the ability to perceive the departure of a person's spiritual forces and his imminent death. Sometimes they are able to bring back these forces and reinstate them in the body to save the man in danger.

[95] g. Ancestor Worship

769 After his death a man is transformed into a living ancestor
775 and is the object of a cult. The cult is closely connected to the agricultural cults; the ancestors are efficient vital forces which

533 of black, red, and yellow fibers, clothes of plaited fibers, and the
292 musicians wear a cuirass made of fana seeds (a sort of bean). The bass player wears a band in the back which reaches to his heels and describes a circle when the musician whirls in going from north to south and from east to west to give the cadence. The other musicians form a circle which the dancers and singers do not enter. Another djo is the So, where the musicians and the singers wear masks of wooden horses, except for two clowns who represent the masculine element in the midst of the crowd of young girls. Lastly, the third djo is the djõ buru (buru, "trumpet"). This is the djo of the slaves; they play the ivory horn and are clothed like the N'ganian, but the bass player represents a cow, and the others are the heifers who respond to the cadence indicated to them by their mother.

E. Literature

538 Bambara literature, entirely oral, is extremely rich. It is the monopoly of the griot who from their earliest days learn the stories, the proverbs, the mottoes associated with each [108] family. They recite very long and very numerous epic songs concerning each great family, accompanying themselves on the harp. Certain parts are recited, others are sung in chorus by the griot and his wife. These stories are at the same time historical narratives of heroes' exploits and the mythical history of a demiurge symbolized by the hero. An infinitely small part of these epic songs has been collected. Some Bambara proverbs and stories have been collected by Moussa Traoré in particular.

545 It is interesting to mention another literary production, one
794 in which the creative inspiration of the artist plays a greater part:
522 these are the narratives of the members of the Kworé brotherhood. The Kworéduga are clowns, or rather commedia dell'arte players. One is a Kworéduga by hereditary transmission or by natural bent. During his initiation in the bush, where he submits to ritual harsh treatment, the initiate learns never to lose his temper, no matter what the circumstances. He is taught a comic language, witty sayings. He is trained to observe men's character closely and to recite stanzas and couplets giving his observations.

545 Example:
794 Tiekoroba kolili (the old man who has nothing)
522 Ita rokina momindi (what you say is not liked)
Ida konieti aie (you are right)
N'ka idia dopina marmandi (but one doesn't like what you say)
Or again:
Demise fentili (the rich young man)
Ida dokma kakadi (one likes what you say)
Ida konie tinaie (what you say is not true)
N'ka idia dokma makadi (but one likes what you say)

545 The Kwoređuga have the su (Moor) as taboo, and they accom-
534 pany themselves in singing with a sacred gourd, yaraba, which con-
794 tains seeds of Lufa cilindrica.

Finally, during the circumcision initiation period for example,
535 the child learns the sacred dances which often mime exploits of the
881 mythical ancestors.

A certain evolution characterizes the native art which has
177 been transformed in a curious fashion by contact with Europeans.
517 In European centers, prolonged contact with the Whites has confused the beliefs that inspired the art, but the artists have lost neither their taste nor their gifts. At the request of the Whites themselves, they have undertaken a controlled art, with the aim of pleasing the Europeans. Needless to say, even if it conserves some charm in its form, all this new art, which evolves with the same swift rhythm as our modes, remains terribly dead, for the true source of inspiration has dried up. This art no longer seeks to be true, but to be pretty; by this it signs its own death warrant.

[109]

CONCLUSION

I. Traditional Interpretation of Mental Characteristics

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In the introduction to Religion Bambara, Tauxier insists on the mental characteristics: "The Bambara has remained rather openly fetishist"; he possesses "two dominant traits, which are absolutely undisputed and indisputable:

"1. He is a very good farmer.

793 The pagan priesthood -- like the Moslem -- also casts a halo of
176 strength and power about its priest; he becomes the close friend of his fetish, and the latter often condescends to take his diamou, or family name, and become, for example, the dasiri, or protecting genie, of a village. Depending on the name of its owner, it will be a Djara or a Kouloubali or a Tankara, etc., etc.

793 An intelligent Bambara who, for one reason or another, cannot
554 be a sorcerer, has one other means of becoming feared and powerful: he can become a gnéna sonna or dougoutigi (priest of the protecting fetish of villages, called dasiri), a gnâtigi or bolitigi (matter of a boli), or at least to belong to a retinue such as surrounds every powerful boli fetish.

793 There are curbs on the thirst for fanga, or power, however. The office of gnéna sonna is the prerogative of a particular family within which it is transmitted from brother to brother by right of inheritance, and not every Negro succeeds in obtaining a boli -- I mean an influential boli that would establish him among his people -- even though one can be obtained by purchase. A man desiring a particular boli must first form a retinue for it, and its members must be taken from the village itself; the mutual mistrust and fear of poison are so great that it is not always possible to do so. Beside the price to be paid, varying between 25 and 30 francs, there are the expenses of the konio, or wedding of the fetish (the purchaser marries his boli), which raise its cost to 60, 80, and sometimes 100 francs. Furthermore, there is a mass of liturgical formulas to be engraved in the memory. These must be learned in every detail, for the omission of one sign or gesture, the garbling of one formula can easily incur the disfavor of the fetish, which is relentless with one who is careless and causes him to perish! It should be added that before a person can reward himself with such a luxury as the acquisition of a fetish, he must consult a sorcerer and take his advice, and if he is not rich and already feared, the sorcerer knows how to place his veto. For the mass
794 of the people there is thus only one way to be safe: to become
793 associated with sects, and with as many sects as possible. Through membership they earn the title of "sons of boli," and build relationships for themselves and make friends among those in power, the

194 bolitigi, the latter have every interest in protecting them, for not
193 only do they pay /38/ their masters annual dues of 80 to 160 cowrie shells, which is little, but they also provide the meats and kola nuts for sacrifices and the d'lo, or beer, for the nocturnal drinking bouts and orgies, and thus are a real godsend.

3. Metamorphosis

776 The Negroes say that a djiné or a boli genie can pass from one
189 body into another. Today it may paddle in a pond, be enclosed in a tree, or sit on a rock; tomorrow, if it wishes, it will make its dwelling in a cow's tail, in a horn, in a dirty rag. Whatever its dwelling may be, it is never confined. The Negroes compare these spirits to the wind, to a breath which enters and penetrates into a space through the smallest crack and fills it. Yet they have bodies and are equipped with organs; they drink, eat, and procreate and differ from man only in their tenuity. Since the Negroes are convinced that certain people have become able to master and command the spirits, could they not come to believe that it was possible to attain, like them, a rarefied state? In any case, they do believe in metamorphosis, and it is by entering into an animal or plant, or changing himself into an animal, a plant, etc., that the wicked person succeeds most often in avenging himself, in appeasing his hatred, and even in doing evil for the mere pleasure of doing it.

189 A good number of sorcerers have this privilege, and sorcerers
564 are not the only ones! Entire castes have the power of metamorphosis;
754 among others the Koulé, who dig out canoes and mend cracked gourds, can all change themselves into hyenas. The sons of the Siri, who are members of the sect dedicated to the boli of this name and are called souba (1) because they commit their crimes during the night, change

1. The name souba is derived from sou ("night") and ba ("great"), ma ("man"), being implied. It means "a man of the great night," "men

789 It is impossible for him to resist this force, this power which seizes him and forces him to act. His mercy or his rage is exercised on the first person at hand; he does not even spare those who are dear to him, and his children, his wives, and his friends quite often become his victims. He has one excuse: he remembers nothing -- for a very good reason -- and if he does remember, it seems to him that he dreamed.

794 789 The Siri sect, which admits women to its ranks, hides its mysteries in such profound secrecy that it is impossible to have a really accurate and precise idea of them, at least for the moment. Nor is it possible to know who is a souba without being a souba oneself; one can only guess. If someone were to denounce his fellow as really being a son of the Siri, he would be declaring himself to be a member of the sect, and the vengeance of the people would fall on both the accuser and the accused. /40/

Belief in the souba, the gne-fla, and in all those people metamorphosing themselves is most childish, and like all Europeans I have treated it as a myth, a daydream, and a bogy used by men to terrify women and children. But now, I must state that the contrary is true: this belief is generally held and is firmly entrenched in minds of the Bambara, and anyone who would try to prove the impossibility of metamorphosis to one of them would appear a fool in his eyes, for to him it is a fact (1).

1. The Siri sect, whose members are known in the Ségou circle as the souba, and among the Malinké, the people of the Worodougou, etc., etc., as the soubaga, resembles the cannibals of Uganda, the Basêzi, and the cannibals of the Ouchirombo, the Baswêzi. These cannibals are not a separate people (in a given family some may be Basêzi or Baswêzi and others not), but members of a sect similar to that of the Bambara souba and capable of the same transformations

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and metamorphoses. Although I have no precise data, this coincidence leads me to think that the same is true of cannibals of the Ubangi.

782 To be convinced one need only be present at the sacrifices; no matter whether the offering is to the djiné genii, the boli genii, or to the shades of ancestors, there recurs, always, the phrase: "Deliver us from the souba and the gné-fla." One of the chief functions of the boli fetishes is just this, and there are some whose special and primary role is to make war against the Siri genii. One of these fetishes is the Nama, a powerful boli which is greatly honored, venerated, and, I should say, fashionable in the Ségou circle and among all Mande peoples. The Ngouansa, known especially in the Worodougou, is also said to specialize in this sphere. From time to time it makes its appearance in the Ségou circle, and its owner without fail does his bit of business and fills his purse. People run to him from all sides bringing hens, goats, and kola nuts, and I have seen these Ngouansa tigi, or masters of a Ngouansa, red with blood after spending the entire morning sacrificing. Before cutting their victims' throats, they stand, facing east with arms akimbo, and shout at the tops of their voices: "Souba, you are dogs, you are even less, the excrements of dogs, oubou bo."

791 825 824 Would the name of the souba and the gné-fla be heard so often from the lips of the Negroes, would families, villages, and sects /41/ spill so much blood or offer so many kola nuts, if they did not sincerely believe in them? Not only do they find an irrefutable proof of the possibility of metamorphosis in the fact that the caterpillar turns into a chrysalis which becomes a butterfly, they will also tell you that the winged termite, "that short-lived creature which on winter evenings comes in swarms around the lights, scattering wings everywhere, in the soup and on the plates," buries itself in the ground, swells like a sorghum seed, grows roots, and becomes a graceful shrub and then a beautiful tree provided it is spared by fire. I do not know the scientific name of this shrub or tree, but the Negroes call it sandéré.

776 risk of spoiling the crop -- o be gno soun tigné ("it destroys the vitality
241 of the seed of the millet grain").
782 These genii do not have special festivals in the course of the year. Their priests, the heads of families, offer them saraka and sacrifices at planting time, and some of them sacrifice a hen in the corner of the field while the crop is sprouting and growing, but that is all.

6. Genii Protectors of Children

889 It is not until circumcision that Bambara children take part in
794 the mysteries of pagan worship, but they are early prepared for it so
776 that they may be introduced to the law of secrecy which they must strictly adhere to later when they are initiates of an occult sect. At about the age of seven or eight years, they become affiliated with an association worshipping the genii responsible for protecting them. All these sects are alike, differing only in name. On the banks of the
[825] Bani and the Niger, the object of worship is the tauri (toad or frog), and the croaking of this animal is imitated in their festivals; some villages have the djara (lion) and imitate its roar by whirling their
[534] slingshots, small boards four fingers wide and one to two centimeters long, attached to the end of a string. The most widespread /children's
[824] genie/ is n'tomo, which undoubtedly gets its name from the tree in which it lives (the /92/ jujube tree, n'tomo). It makes children hale and hearty, preserves them from sickness, defends them against the invisible little creatures of the bush, against spells and sorcery, and makes them strong, steadfast, and impervious to suffering.

The confraternity of the n'tomo is modeled after that of the boli. (This is true of both kinds -- for there are two; a white costume is worn to the dance for n'tomo djé and a black costume for n'tomo fign). In order to be admitted one must offer a hen to the child who is head of the n'tomo (the n'tomotigi), prostrate oneself before the tree of the genie, and swear to keep the secret and never to speak of the n'tomo to the uninitiated, especially not to little girls.

869 In addition to wearing the costume, which is white
794 (n'tomo djé) or yellow, black, etc. (n'tomo fign), the boy who
778 dances the dance of the genie hides his face in a frightful wooden mask on top of which are five, seven, and sometimes eight horns.

869 The n'tomo injects a whole organization into the world
794 of children. They quite naturally divide themselves into
561 small groups, each corresponding to a circumcision that is to take

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Child wearing the loincloth called yaba.

place, and are thus all of the same age, born in the same year, or very nearly so. The member of each group who is the oldest -- be it by only one day -- becomes its head, and all the younger heads obey the head of the oldest group, the n'tomotigi, and his aide, the n'tomotigi siéré (1), who is drawn from

1. Siéré, "aide," "deputy."

the group which will be circumcised after that

869 of the n'tomotigi. /93/

794 These two children prepare the hunts for rats and lizards, or - 561 ganize the games and supervise them, and if an offence is committed by the band, it is up to them to discover the culprit. When quarrels, arguments, and fights arise among the children, they intervene, judge each case, and, if the matter is worth the trouble, the mischief-maker, or the one who is declared responsible, is severely beaten. All this

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Mask of the n'tomo, the children's fetish.

produces unity within the various groups and prevents them from coming to blows at every moment.

The little girls also have an organization into groups, but it lacks cohesion; it would have to be religious in nature, since religion is the basis of all unity in the Bambara country. Only at the time of excision does all this change, and then there is real cohesion among them.

796 Every year children sacrifice to the n'tomo genie through the 859 mediation of their head, the n'tomotigi. The day of the sacrifice is a day of great rejoicing which ends in flagellation. The material for

796 the sacrifice is furnished by the children themselves; all of them to-
857 gether work a small field for this purpose during the winter, and if the harvest is not sufficient, they go begging from door to door so that nothing will be lacking at the feast -- neither d'lo, the millet beer, nor kola nuts. On the evening of this great day, each new initiate chooses his n'golo mouso, as they call the little girl each one takes as his "sister of the heart," his bonne amie as one would say in France /his girlfriend/. But she is more; she is a little maid of all work, and the gift which he gives her every year at the celebration is more a payment than a gift of friendship, "pure and simple." /94/

7. The Genie Protector of Circumcised Youths

794 At circumcision the Bambara leave the association of the n'tomo
776 and place themselves under the protection of more powerful genii.
778 These genii are all of the same nature, only the name differs with each region, and all the confraternities are copied after one and the same model. The most widespread is that of the n'golo (1).

1. In Bani it is the n'goso rather than the n'golo.

The n'golo is nothing but two forked branches fastened together and hung on a light dloma (2). One can meet it quite often in a

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2. Dloma are forked sticks on which rest the crossbars or beams that hold up the flat terrace roofs. The name dloma is given to all forked sticks, small and large.

corner of the village, out of doors, but usually it is under a small shed or hut. This genie gives the youths not only strength, vigor, and health, but also the talent, if not of pleasing women, at least of attracting them and thus being able to obtain some crude satisfactions. It helps the unmarried to meet the girl of the moment, and thanks to it,

794 a married man finds his wife gentle, submissive, and obedient. It
796 preserves the members from disgraceful ailments and, in a quite
798 special manner, from ma ko sa (3), a paralysis of the reproductive

3. Ma, "man"; ko, "affair," "parts," "testicles"; sa, "dead," "lifeless."

organ.

794 This group of worshippers forms the foundation of the organization of the fla-n-to (4), headed by the to-n-tigi (5) who is the master of

4. To, "gruel"; fla, "for"; flani, "twins of the same age."

5. To, "gruel"; tigi, "head."

the n'golo fetish. His assistants before the genie help him with his duties; he has a siéré, or aide, a djéli, who is a kind of herald and repeats his orders, advice, and thanks during the days of celebration and drinking bouts, and a djalatiké, responsible for seeing that the rules or laws of the organization are kept. Among the Negroes nothing is done without drinking and eating; they must have celebrations and drinking bouts, and in order to obtain the means for them the fla-n-to impose a large number of fines on their members, the to-n-dé (6).

6. To; "gruel"; "child."

Their rules are /95/ nevertheless odd. For example, a fine is imposed on whoever blows his nose or sneezes, gets up from the table, or starts eating before commanded to do so by the head, the tontigi. Those who are late for the dance or sleep during the day or night of a celebration are granted no mercy! (1)

1. When the tondé organize a dance or celebration, everyone must be present and spend a sleepless night.

794 The to-n-dé, or members of the association, are formed into groups, each corresponding to a circumcision, and all these groups, united among themselves by a common bond, which is the worship to be rendered to the n'golo genie, submit to and obey the head, the n'golo tigi, preferably called to-n-tigi. Thanks to this unity, a host of quarrels and fights is avoided, and they all help each other, sharing in the joys and sorrows of their fellow members. In a word, this association corresponds, in miniature, to our societies of mutual assistance and help.

794 796 To get a girl of the moment, the young to-n-dé from time to time sacrifice a small pullet. But a big sacrifice is made yearly and the victim is at least a goat; it is offered in the name of all. The offering of the general sacrifice does not prevent each initiate from adding a hen and a kola nut; food abounds, millet beer flows in streams, the association furnishes food and drinks to the whole village and to friends from surrounding villages. On this day also the youths circumcised during the year enter the confraternity of the n'golo and become to-n-de, or members of the organization of the fla-n-to. To do so they must spend from 80 to 120 cowrie shells (2 to 3 sous) and offer to the fetish the hen and two kola nuts as a sacrifice.

8. The Women's Genie

776 824 Not all villages possess this fetish tree, which is called mouso ka djiri (2), but all hamlets have a genie whose chief function is to

2. This tree is often a fig tree called n'zoro or a toro sycamore (ficus vogeli, ficus ferruginosa). Mouso means "woman"; ka is particle indicating possession; djiri means "tree"; the whole phrase therefore means "the tree of the women."

776 824 preserve the freshness of youth in the ladies for a long time, to give mothers breasts that are loaded with /96/ milk, to bring fertility to the sterile, and finally to keep an eye on the periods, or menses, of each and every one. Every month at the new moon the excised women, 776 535 married and unmarried, spend an entire night dancing in its honor, [534] to the beat of a special drum called mouso denou (1). These dances

1. Mouso, "woman"; denou, "drum."

are not very decent, and except for some shameless individuals who watch even these scenes from the height of the flat terrace roofs, the men among the Bani stay at a distance.

776 824 Many villages (and they are numerous in Bani country) believe that the genie takes shelter in a fig tree near the walls and establishes its home there. It is the trunk of this tree that is reddened with blood at the annual festival, and most of the dances take place in its shade, as does the repast of which the Negro women partake on this occasion. The girls excised during the year spend 80 to 120 cowrie shells, offer a pullet for the sacrifice, and are thereafter permitted to pay their respects to the genie.

5194 Out of this group of worshippers arises a small mutual aid society, identical in every way with the youth's association, the fla-n-to. The head of this organization is usually the oldest woman of the village, and she is given the title of massa, "queen." All the female population call her mba, "my mother."

This society, called mouso-n-to (2), from time to time offers

2. Mouso, "woman"; to, "gruel."

the people of the village d'lo, or millet beer, and once a year at the festival of the genie a plentiful repast with a dessert of kola nuts for the old and the usual drinking bout for everyone. Those who break the laws of the association are fined, and the sum of all these fines, together with the 80 or 120 cowrie shells spend by the excised girls of the year, help the massa and her associates to meet all expenses.

776 The fetish protects the village by causing the evil spells and
778 sorcery cast on it to misfire. It defends the village against wicked
621 people and against its enemies, and thanks to it the inhabitants can
793 peacefully devote themselves to their work in the fields. While averting plagues and diseases which decimate the population, it gives strength, health, and vigor to all, and finally it populates the village by making the women fertile. Above all, it is the source of unity among families for it brings them all together under the authority of a single head; the friends of the head of the family whose name, or diamou, it bears, are its friends, and his enemies are also its own. To fail the priest, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, is to fail the fetish, so close and intimate is the union between the two.

11. The Koté, or Koré, Genie

794 Since it is the fundamental basis of power and authority, the
776 worship of the dasiri can, with some justice, be regarded as the first
778 and oldest of all Bambara religious practices. That of the koté, or koré, likewise seems to me quite respectable from this standpoint and just as old. As a matter of fact, this spirit, like the dasiri, lives in
[824] a little grove near the village, and the three trees it likes to inhabit are the baobab, the false cedar, and the nettle tree.

794 The worship of the koré is especially popular in Bani country. Today not all the villages have the fetish, but all have at /103/ least a few initiates belonging to this semioccult sect. The sect includes women among its members; it is divided into eight groups, each ruled by its oldest member, who in turn is under the authority of the koretigi, the supreme head of the association.

794 At the time of the annual sacrifices, and especially at the
778 sacrifices made every seven years on the days of admission (for it is necessary to be a koré dé (1) in order to participate in the secret part

1. Koré, the fetish bearing this name; dé, "son."

194 178 of the mysteries carried out in the sacred grove), these groups present the most ludicrous gathering in the circle of Ségou. The kara maou carry a red and white perforated board, about two meters long called the kara; the souroukou wear a mask resembling a hyena (souroukou) and walk leaning on two sticks; and the korodouga get themselves up in a costume impossible to describe. The ta tougoula (2) dance,

2. Ta, "fire"; tougou, "to light."

holding a burning torch in each hand; the n'goni sama (3) cover them-

3. N'goni, "thorns"; sama, "to draw to oneself"; they are also called wara, "wild," "fearless," "courageous."

selves with thorns or lacerate themselves on the chest and under the armpits until they bleed; and the bisatjila (4) whip themselves with

4. Bisa, or bousa, "stick," "switch"; tji, "hit," "break."

long, flexible switches. There are also the djara (lions), who wear a mask just like that of the hyena (souroukou) only larger, and the soula (monkeys), who parade with hideous, grimacing masks and wear a tail in back made of braided grass.

194 The koré sect is semioccult, for while only initiates are allowed at the sacrifices and within the sacred grove, the dances are held in the village, and all, men, women, and children, attend. The wives of the korodouga belong to the confraternity by right, but they do not know the password djantéma ("man of the djanté"), and they are forbidden to enter the sacred grove. Their great privilege is that they are permitted to wear their husbands' uniform, which is a long necklace of red beans, to sit with the men around the gourds of beer, and finally to dance the dirty and disgusting dance of the korodouga without having to be ashamed.

794 The koré fetish watches over the crops and gives its initiates the 776 only pleasures that they know and desire -- to drink, to eat, and to enjoy /104/ a woman -- and, as will later be demonstrated, all this comes out in their dances and orgies. In spite of its great power, the poor genie cannot handle its many concerns; the Bambara, who judge everything according to themselves to such an extent that they inject their own organization into the world of invisible beings, have therefore given it eight groups of spirits who carry out its orders and make up its court. Some watch over the insignia and preserve the names of the initiates, and others render powerless anyone who would harm the crops. Just like a distinguished, powerful, and rich man here, the koré has its storyteller /griots/ or heralds, the korodouga, who sing its praises, transmit to it the petitions and prayers of the initiates, and dance its dances. The eight groups of the sect are simply the representation of this court, the concrete expression of the Negroes' concept of it.

794 The initiation into, or affiliation with, the koré sect takes place only every seven years. It is long and painful; for fifteen days the young initiates live in the sacred grove and cannot go into the village. Since they need some training for future dances, the old men come to torment them every noon in the worst heat, and each initiate, according to the group to which he belongs, suffers for some moments the torment of fire, thorns, or the rod.

[626] The rigor of the admission in no way alienates the Bambara, and in Bani it is a disgrace to refuse the hen for the sacrifice and the /payment of/ 120 cowrie shells, and not to join. It is true that everything is repaid, for the sect has many festivals and d'lo, or millet beer, is never lacking.

In addition to the annual sacrifice, a sacrifice is made to the genie every time an initiate dies. There is another sacrifice on the anniversary of his death, and during the dry season the kore de go from one festival to another, spending their nights in nameless drinking bouts and orgies. /105/

852 tear, a complaint, or a cry of pain, and they are so imperious that
796 one might think they were of bronze.
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The N'golo, the Special Fetish of the Circumcised

852 The children of this fetish, whose function I explained in the
794 preceding chapter, grant themselves many days of celebration in its honor in the course of the year. The main festival, however, is annual and in addition to the dégé, a hen, and two kola nuts offered by each initiate, a goat is sacrificed on behalf of all.

Since it is from this fetish that the fla-n-to organization derives its existence, its members, the to-n-déou, offer drink and food to the whole village for two or three days. The women, too, contribute their share to this horrible drinking bout, and their queen (fama, massa) -- humbling herself before the to-n-tigi, head of the fla-n-to and priest of the n'golo, who thoughtlessly wastes the produce of the field worked by his subjects in the winter -- distributes many kola nuts and adds still more to the d'lo, which already flows in streams.

The beer is drunk out of doors on the public square, and everyone -- men, women, and children -- is there, shouting, dancing,
[346] and getting drunk. Seated under a goua, a shed covered with coarse mats, /113/ and surrounded by his acolytes (the siéré, the djéli, and the djalatiké), the to-n-tigi sits in the place of honor, and it is he who directs the drinking and the dances. He is really king on these days, and all obey him at the slightest sign, gesture, or word. When he gets up to romp or take a turn before the drums, he is honored; all the initiates call "you you," shake their caps (ban fla), and compete as to who will take his gun, spear, stick, or ax and beat the time for the dance. But he wants to speak; he must speak; he feels the need to issue an order, to give thanks, or to impose a light fine on his band; and his spokesman runs to his side. He repeats the speech of his chief word for word and sentence by sentence, and sometimes even adds a comment of his own, for some Bambara have a sharp wit and very easily find a saying to bring a laugh.

852 Every time one of the three principal members of the staff,
•794 wants to dance, respects are paid to them or to their leader, and all day and all night nothing is heard but frightful "you you" and atrocious cries. There is a protocol for everyone to follow, and before each to-n-dé begins to prance in front of the drums, he goes and bows to his leader to show his devotion and respect for him. He holds himself like a spring, brandishes the gun, ax, or stick that he will use in the dance, and in one jump strikes his feet together under the nose of the one to whom he is paying his respects. The women are quieter and show their respect by a genuflection before the master.

In addition to his staff the master of a n'golo, the to-n-tigi, has pages, a standard bearer, trumpeters, and soldiers, and to vary the program he goes here and there with his frenzied band to greet an elder and give him a serenade. In some villages custom decrees that the youths put on the best they have in the way of clothing; in others, on the contrary, they must get themselves up in horrible, dirty rags so that, on seeing them thus clad, one asks where they could have dug up all these horrors. They must amuse themselves and be
[522] amused, laugh and cause laughter, and this last aim is always accomplished as they have such priceless mimics. /114/

The Mouso ka djiri, the Women's Special

776 It is impossible to know all the genii responsible for watching
796 over women, for they are legion. Every month, at the new moon,
831 the women organize a dance in their honor, and every year they make a public, solemn sacrifice to them. The most widespread is the mouso ka djiri, and its worship flourishes especially in Bani country.

When its festival comes, all the excised women offer it a little /millet/ flour mixed with water, a hen, and two kola nuts, and the head of the village, or, in his absence, an elder, goes and reddens the bark of the fetish tree (1). There is no need for me to go into

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1. Some people assert that they have seen women sacrificing. I have seen women perform saraka involving bloodshed, but never a sacrifice.

you accept it at my hands." If one of the pieces falls with the pulp on top and the other onto the pulp, there is an affirmative answer from the dasiri. The sacrificer bites the kola nut, cuts out with his teeth the piece that contains the seed, and, when he has chewed it a moment, spits the remains onto the bark of the fetish tree.

This procedure, wholly dependent on chance, is often long, for the pieces of kola nut do not always fall in the desired position at the first try. After three failures the crowd ceases to restrain itself and, with gestures and voice, each person intercedes for the unfortunate one. The cries do not stop until the kola nut gives the answer, "I accept and am no longer angry!"

The Semioccult Society of the Koré, or Koté

The Bambara are, above all, farmers, and cultivating a field has such great importance in their eyes that for them it alone really deserves the name of work. One who does not handle the pick may be active and skillful, but he is not a worker and one does not say of him: "A bi ajaké, he is working." But will the seed that /122/ they consign to the earth in the winter sprout, grow, become large, and ripen? However little one knows the Bambara, one can imagine and understand their fears, for they are surrounded by a band of malicious spirits ever ready to pounce on them. Therefore they heed protectors and helpers, and at planting time they offer something to all, even to the rain. The main fetish to which they appeal is the koté, or koré, which lives in a tree in the middle of a small grove.

In order to be present at the sacrifices to the koté, it is necessary to be initiated and to know the password. This initiation, may take place by day, but at least in Bani country, it usually takes place at nightfall when the setting sun takes on a bloody hue. The sons of the genie go in procession to the sacred grove. The koretigi, the priest, opens the march, preceded by musicians who beat the denouba (1) and the kingé (2). With him are the kâra ma ("man of

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1. Drums over a meter long and peculiar to the koré.

2. A kind of triangle which is hung on the thumb of the left hand and is struck with a ring or an iron nail placed on the little finger.

[718] the kârâ"), one of whom carries the kârâ, the perforated board which is the emblem of the fetish and at the same time the altar on which sacrifice is made to deceased members. First come the souroukou (hyenas) who guard the sacred grove and during the sacrifices drive away prying, uninitiated people; they wear crude masks, roll their big heads right and left, and utter frightful "hou hous." The [522] korodouga (clowns), who rake the paths in the sacred grove as well as its environs to protect it from brush fires, run from one to another shouting obscenities. Furiously they shake their gourds, which have handles and are perforated and filled with small stones, and furiously they blow into pipes made of pumpkin stems. The leader of this [292] band is dressed up in a cloak made of reed stems, he also wears a reed headdress which is topped by a pyramid of large red beans called n'go blé and decorated with a plume; in his hands he holds the emblem of the group, a long pole on which are hung dirty bags, sorghum stems 10 to 20 centimeters long bound into bundles, pumpkin stems, /123/ skulls of rats, beaks of ducks and hawks, panther claws, etc.

794 796 292 522 Apart from the long string of red beans which all korodougo are required to wear which they twine around their necks several times or sling over the shoulder, crossing and recrossing it on the back and chest, each one dresses according to his own inspiration. The hats are made of bunches of feathers, wings of vultures and ducks, and even entire birds, and around them to decorate them further are red beans, rat skulls, birds beaks, claws, and small bones; all these objects fall on the neck and shoulders and knock together with a sinister sound. Next to men in full breeches are men in rags or men with close-fitting trousers made of innumerable pieces all in different

794 colors, one leg of which goes down to the ankle while the other does
796 not even reach the knee. Some brandish wooden swords, and others
292 ride astride on a bamboo, a reed, or a sorghum stalk, rearing and
522 kicking, and there is not one who does not act the clown.

794 The bisatjila (flagellants) make their flexible whips whistle in
796 the air; shortly thereafter these whips rain blows onto their backs; the
[185] ta tougoula (fire lighters, incendiaries) seem impatient to shower their bare backs with sparks. The djara (lions) or sogo (beasts, animals) with masks even larger than those of the souroukou (hyenas) growl around the n'goni sama (1), also called wara (fearless wild animals).

1. N'goni, "thorns"; sama, "to kill for oneself."

The soula run from one group to another, slip between legs, and never stay still; they are seen everywhere, sometimes standing, sometimes with hands on the ground on all fours, or again sitting down, breaking bundles of grass or bits of wood between their hands and throwing them with shrill cries at the heads of their companions. And at the end of the procession come the old men, weighed down by the years and no longer of an age for all this fancy dress. They drag or carry the victims intended for the sacrifices.

In the grove around the sacred tree, there is a deafening noise of drums, triangles, reed pipes, and many voices /124/ that shout all together without ever harmonizing. At a sign from the leader, the kârâ bearer goes and stands before the fetish tree, and everything becomes calm and quiet. The youths who have been waiting for seven years to be initiated advance in a line, fall on their knees before the fetish and its emblem, and then prostrate themselves with foreheads in the dust. They remain in this position as long as the sacred hymn lasts. On rising, they say: "Djanté koré déou djanté (djanté children
[535 of the djanté koré), djanté ma (man of the djanté), " and each dances
831] the dance of the group to which he belongs. These dances are indecent and always conclude with an obscene gesture.

The oldest sons belong to the groups of their fathers; as to the others, they choose the group they like best. Thenceforth they are

194 korédé ("sons of koré"), and in all the province of Ségou, wherever
196 a sacrifice is offered to the fetish, they may go into the sacred grove without any fear and take part in the mysteries. They have the password -- "djanté ma, man of djanté," and will know how to answer when interrogated by the souroukou (group of the hyena).

194 After the initiation the koretigi (priest of koré) proceeds with
196 sacrifices. Everything happens as at the dasiri: after the libations of
182 /millet/ flour (dégé) and beer (d'lo), the trunk of the sacred tree is reddened with blood, and all around the blood are tufts of fur and feathers stuck to the bark by remainders of chewed kola nut. A hyena mask called koré koungolo ("head /tête/ of koré") is also reddened with blood, as is the kârâ, the emblem of the genie which is used as an altar for deceased initiates. Part of the meat is taken to the village, and the rest is grilled on the spot and eaten without any seasoning whatever.

In the sacrifices, koré and those that form its court are asked to watch over the harvest so that it may be abundant, to watch over the flocks so that they may thrive, to provide the petitioners with their fill of food and drink all their lives, and to give them a vigorous old age, etc., and all this is requested for one sole purpose: "so that we may be able to enjoy a woman and devote ourselves to carnal pleasures."

194 After the repast the crowd abandons itself to the dance, and un-
196 til morning there is an indescribable uproar and endless shouting. At daybreak they go to the public square, and as long as the beer (d'lo) lasts /125/ the orchestra makes bedlam in front of the drinkers who squat around full gourds, and the women sit on mats or tiny stools piled on top of each other, clap their hands, and answer the obscenities of the korodouga with further obscenities.

[535] The dance of the groups, in which all members, young and old, take part, consists of more or less comical contortions which they execute going around in a circle, one behind the other. The old men tire quickly and their throats soon get dry, so they are not slow to sit down and get drunk to please koré, and the young people then abandon themselves and dance to their hearts' content.

194 Two or three tatougoula, a flaming torch in each hand, open
196 the dance. They scorch their backs, chests, and armpits, and
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794 thousands of sparks rain onto their heads and bare bodies, and smoke
796 and sizzle on their skins before going out. The korodouga, armed with
785 leafy branches, chase the sparks. They devote themselves chiefly to their obscene songs; their minds on the perforated gourds which they shake furiously, and more than one dancer feels himself getting roasted. And when the torches are almost burned out the tatougoula squat before the big drum and for the last time shake the handful of
[522] burning straw that they have left. An obscene gesture provokes a stifled laugh here and there, a "hou hou" from the souroukou, a roar from the djara, a chuckle from the soula, and cries of encouragement from around the gourds: "O do, that's it!"

While the djara /lions/ or sogo /beasts/, /wearing/ huge masks roar around the groups of drinkers, the ng'oni sama or wara tear their chests and their armpits with brushes of thorns, and the soula, grimacing and weeping, throw the group of women into confusion and put the children to flight. As to the bisatjila, they circle like lions in a cage, uttering wild animal cries and trying to excite themselves. Suddenly, as if seized by fury, they brandish their long, flexible whips. These whirl for a moment above their heads, whistle in the air, and then slap the flesh. The men strike hard; each blow leaves its mark or furrow, and /126/ blood often flows. They pale and tremble in all their limbs under the pain, but in spite of everything they strike and strike, for the instrument of torture must be worn to shreds and fly to pieces. At every blow of the whip the korodouga band throw themselves onto the victim and massage and rub him, and the souroukou lose themselves in indecent behavior in front of the great drum.

794 In addition to the sacrifice offered every seven years, there are
796 annual sacrifices to the koré, to the shades of its priests, the korétigi,
782 and finally to the shades of its initiates, the koréde. There is always
764 a sacrifice at the death of an initiate; the groups dance the sacred dance, and for three nights there is the shouting and the indescribable bedlam in the koré tou ("grove of the koré") of which I have told.

794 If the deceased initiate was an old man, a graybeard, he has
764 completed his whole career and his fellow-members come in great numbers to pay him their respects. Before the corpse, which is laid out under the trees which shade the entrance of the village, they

794 carry out their indecencies, shout obscenities, drink, and get drunk.
764 And for three consecutive nights after the burial the same scenes are repeated in front of the fetish tree.

794 The anniversary of the death of a koredé ("son of koré") who
769 became a koretigi (priest of koré), a gnéna-n-sonnaba (priest of the dasiri) or a gouatigi (head of a group, of a family), is celebrated with pomp; the family always makes it a point of honor to cook d'lo (beer), and people come from all directions to take part in the orgy. /127/

Chapter 7

The Worship of Satan or Worship of the Gnâ, or Boli

1. What is Meant by Gnâ, or Boli

776 Ever since God created their race and put it into the world, the Bambara have respected, venerated, and sacrificed to the gnéna, or djiné, those beings who are intermediate between angels and men. When one of them forgets himself under the influence of a jug of beer so far as to open to you -- oh, very slightly! -- a recess of his soul, he delights in telling you this, but he is careful not to make such a statement when he speaks to you of the gnâ, or boli. For although the beginnings of boli worship fade into the dark of the ages, it nevertheless has its history. The origin of each boli is known, and an initiate, however little instructed in its rites, can tell you whether it comes from the north or south, east or west, and whether it is male or female; and every graybeard can recite its family tree for you.

There is a great difference between the gnéna and the gnâ; they are different in every way, and we have here two beliefs which, though parallel, are absolutely distinct. Any object, whatever it may be, can become the home of a gnena, but these spirits prefer a living being, a plant, a tree, or an animal, for example, and when one is tired of its dwelling it moves elsewhere. A gnâ always lives in an

Since all the Bambara could not be made to submit to shameful servitude, the Moslems were satisfied to impose a tax, to forbid public worship of the idols, and, with sheathed sword, sought to make converts by persuasion. Their caravans were quick to cover the country, preaching Islam in all places both favorable and unfavorable, but the mass of the people could not be approached. In order to give /131/ their beliefs a rational basis, they always did everything in the name of "Alla, " "Stamboul" (the Sultan of Constantinople), and "Makka (Mecca), and said to the conqueror: "All true belief comes from Mecca (Makka); it is the center of all religious life, so why do you fight so hard against our boli? They all come from Mecca. God has given you the formula: 'there is no Divinity other than God and Mohammed is His prophet'; for you He prescribes ablutions, Friday rest, etc.. Keep your formula and shout it! To us Bambara He has given the boli and bloody sacrifices, so why do you want to take from us our treasures that are hungry for blood?" I do not doubt that we owe our "legend" to the discussions which arose between the m'rabet (the marabout, or Moslem priest) and the gnâtigi, or bolitigi. Here it is as I so often heard it told by bold old men:

A group of youths who were devoting themselves to trade and following lady luck (ou toumbe kolo (1) gnini, "they were seeking cowrie shells"), one day took the road to the east. Over mountains and valleys the little band walked and walked for a long time, and then finally they reached the great, blue, salty water, the ocean, on the shores of which lies the holy city, Mecca (Makka) (2).

1. Kolo, "cowrie shells" (singular, koké), small shells used as money.

2. Since the Moslems said that Mecca was located on the seacoast, and since the Bambara did not know Arabia, they believed it to be in this direction. In their minds the ocean does not have to be crossed to get there. Actually, this is the least of their worries.

773 Their stay there lasted several years, and no one expected to
774 see them again. It was said that bandits had fallen upon them and
●794 massacred them or reduced them to slavery, and funeral rites were to be given them. The sanga fo (3) in their honor began; the women

3. Condolences from acquaintances to the family of the deceased.

wept, filling the air with their cries, and after several days of dancing, everybody went back to pleasure and work.

The young Bambara were not dead, they came back, and, better yet, were in no way stained by Mohammedanism. Even in the heart of Mecca they met a Bambara tribe, brothers who were thoroughly fetishist, and their secret rites, sacred dances, and sacrifices made more impression on their hearts and imaginations than the worn and cold formula, stupid prostrations, and tiresome /132/ ablutions of the sons of Islam. They were initiated into the rites of the gnâ, or boli; they bought some; and one fine day, rich in gold and silver, flocks of goats and sheep, women and slaves, they took the road back to the Niger. The caravan was large, the loads heavy, the road was barely passable, and discouragement touched the hearts of the bravest more than once. Finally, they reached the great river and the loads and boli filled boats by the hundreds.

The start of the voyage was happy; only a very few loads fell into the water and were lost going through rapids. Then a day came when everything changed; the wind started to blow violently; the water boiled, foamed, and swelled; and the boats, made of two hollowed tree trunks placed end to end and bound together with weak ropes, crashed together and broke. Who can tell how many disappeared in the floods that day with all their cargoes! The loss was great, especially in boli, but these have the power of gods, and they quickly changed into fish. According to the legend there have been torpedo fish, manatee, etc. in the depths of the river since that day.

Everything was not lost, however. When the travelers arrived in the Bèlèdougou and the Ben-dougou (1), they still had a large stock

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1. Bélédougou: bélé, "ferruginous rock"; dougou, "village," "country"; a province back of Bamako kati. Ben-dougou: ben, "meet"; dougou, "country"; the eastern end of Bambara country, on the Bani.

of boli. People came running from all directions. Of course there were festivals and amusements, and everyone wanted news and wished to learn about this Mecca which was so vaunted by the Moslems. "It is indeed a large city," they said, "but do not think that all they know there is the worn formula la ilah ill l'allah, which is shouted by the sons of the Prophet all day long. At Mecca there are Bambara (2) who sacrifice to genii as we do. They have additional rites that

2. This word Bambara (Bamana) of the legend denotes less the people than the religion, and it seems to me that it should be understood in the sense of kafri, as already indicated in speaking of the origin of the word Bambara. (As I pointed out /in Chap. IV, 3/ I believe its original meaning to have been "rebel" and not "son of the alligator" or of the fish ban ma, a kind of tench.)

you do not know; /133/ they know how to protect themselves from evil genii and demons; they sacrifice to the boli. The latter /boli/ are terrible. They kill anyone who insults or displeases them and actually have consideration only for those who give themselves to them and become their children. Thanks to them, our brothers in Mecca are rich and powerful and live to be old. They quickly discover thefts, lies, and adultery. In fact, the boli render justice, and whoever asks it of them cannot lie with impunity. The deepest insult against them is to call on them to witness a lie; they always take vengeance for this offense, causing endless evils to its perpetrator

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778 and even going so far as tocause his death." These accounts excited
794 the Negroes' curiosity; they wished to see the boli, wanted to sacrifice to them. They gave themselves to the boli, and thus became their children.

Once the people were initiated, the travelers unveiled the mysteries to them, bound them by the law of secrecy. They imposed upon them the prohibition against admitting uninitiated men and women and children to their ranks, and the sects were formed. These have multiplied continuously; each boli has its own, and since the boli are male and female and produce children, they have become legion, and each village has sects and boli of its own. Although the
778 worship of the boli has not destroyed that of the gnéna, or djiné, it
794 has long exceeded the latter; their sacrifices and drinking bouts are accompanied by an external pomp that has a different grandeur, and no important action is taken without their agreement. It can be asserted without fear of error that the worship of the gnâ, or boli, is the chief religion of the Bambara at the present time. It is the basis of union within families and the foundation of the sina-n-koun, or sworn friendship; through the boli the people of the same village are closely united, and this union extends from one village to another and from one province to another, since all members of a boli's sect are brothers and owe each other mutual assistance under certain specified circumstances.

In the Bambara's mind (and I have spoken of this at length in
776 my chapter, "The Ideas of the Bambara are not of Islamic Origin"),
778 the boli are nothing less than intrinsically evil beings in revolt against
782 the Supreme Being, God the Creator and Lord of all things. As the formula of the sacrifice to Touafé Bla suggests, the place where they dwell is fire or hell, and there is not a Negro who will not tell you /134/ that the boli is a demon (sétané). Can it not be said that his religion is a worship rendered to "Satan himself?" He renders this worship in full knowledge of what he is doing. Have I not heard the sacrificer in a sacrifice to a Nama boli (1), shout before cutting the

1. A note by Father Coppe of the White Fathers (unpublished manuscript),

881 It is after midnight. The circumcised boys are seated in the
796 place of honor where their older brothers sat before, and they furious-
● 794 ly shake their gourd disks strung on sticks. Leaning on their millet stalks, the regulation sticks, the excised girls in their turn arrive at the public square, singing and shaking their pierced gourds, and the dances begin as at the soli si and continue until morning. Outside, under the sacred trees, the bell of the fetish tinkles and summons the initiates, and the Komo god roars through the mouth of its herald. At a sign from the priest the circumcised boys get up, leave the village, and go under the big trees to swear loyalty and to dedicate themselves, body and soul, to the prince of darkness (1). How can

1. The scene which I describe sometimes takes place the evening before. Sometimes, by order of a sorcerer and for a reason considered serious, the entrance into the sect of a fetish is postponed until later.

this scene be described! The circumcised boys sit under the god's favorite tree, and the crowd of initiates, grouped by villages, gather around the gourds full of d'lo that froths and bubbles. Little fires are lighted and cast a strange light into the night, and a circle of crouching human beings appears and takes shape. The master of the idol (Komo tigi); the sacrificer (mourou kala tigi); the beadle (darotigi), who rings for the sacrifice and gathers the initiates; the fetish's storytellers /griots/ (Komo djeli maou), who sing the praises of the god, fall into catalepsy at the sacrifices and then give out oracles;
[778 the Komo warada, who wear a coat covered with the feather of guinea
534] hens, hens, egrets, etc., and a long horned mask, and who carry the fetish to the place of sacrifice and blow into an iron tube that ends in two horns /186/ and is at once idol and trumpet, and draw from it frightful "fouin fouin" that freeze you with fear: in short, all the staff of the Komo appear on the scene, and there is a lascivious dance, the dance of the god, the sacred dance. Then there is the

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rallying cry, bellowed by a hundred throats, "kou kou kou, ke ke ke"; drums roll, and drunken voices shout:

T'an ta bara ladjé.
Stop, let us go and see the gourd (of beer).
Bara ma dja an na,
When the beer has made us joyful (1),

1. Dja, "to make happy," "to please," "to be agreeable," "to make joyful."

An na youyouba yougouba.
We will dance and dance (2).

2. Yougouba, "to dance with a shaking of the whole body."

Gnâ tigi, né ka nougouni-n-ko min yé?
Master of the gnâ, what has happened to my (hen's) entrails? (3)

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3. This line recalls a peculiarity of the sacrifice of the newly initiated. With one twist of the finger the sacrificer takes the entrails out of the hen, and when the young initiate wants to draw it, he is quite surprised to find that none of the viscera are in it any more.

Gnâ tigi do nougou na bo gnouan yé.
A master of the gnâ (kodit) the entrails will come out together.

Excited, or rather irritated, by the wait, the circumcised boys get up, move forward in a line, and prostrate themselves before the god's escort, the one who shakes without any rest under his cloak of feathers and brings resounding blasts from his horned tube (4), and

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4. While the trumpet is blowing, the initiates accompany it with pipes.

grows and shrinks by raising and lowering his jointed mask. The hour of the initiation has rung, and they will be born into the religious life.

The master of the idol, the Komo tigi, places the horned iron tube on each initiates shoulder, and in a slow, solemn, hollow voice, he says these words of the initiation ceremony (5);

5. During this ceremony the initiates are prostrate.

For the Komo

Q. Moun bé i koun? What have you on your head?
A. A kala be n'koun. His handle is on my head (repeated three times). /187/
Q. I y'a yé wa? Have you seen him?
A. Né m'a yé. I have not seen him.
Q. Nin be ma fa. I y a fo ma min yé, a k'i fo! He kills a man. If you speak of him to anyone, may he kill you!
A. Ni ne y'a fo ma min yé, a k'a né fa! If I speak of him, may he kill me!
Q. I si sirila gnâma-n-fou, djala la. Your life is fastened onto the cedar with gnâma-n-fou!
A. Né si sirila à la. My life is bound to it.
Q. Ni se ma fo ma si yé, Komo k'i kisi! If you do not speak of him to anyone, may the Komo be your protector!
A. A ka né kisi! May he be my protector!
Q. I y'a fo ma min ye, i kono ka founou, a k'i fa! If you speak of if, may your abdomen swell, may he kill you!
A. A ka né fa! May he kill me!
Q. Komo k'i son ni bien (1) ta, ki koun ti, né kana bo djoli kana bo.

4: Henry--204 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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1. Bien, a woman's sexual organs. Bien, "horn"; this is a veiled term sometimes meaning a man's organs. They also say k'i bien ta, "may he tear out the organs."

May the Komo take away your heart and your organs, may he crush your head without your brains coming out, without your blood coming out.

A. O k'a ké. May it be so.

For the Nama

Q. I y'a fo ma min ye, Boli k'i so ta, k'i bien ta (1), ka doun i djoufé ka bo i da fé. If you speak of him, may the boli cause your house and your wives to perish, may he enter you by the anus and leave you by the mouth.

/1. Same as preceding footnote 1/

A. O k'a ké! May it be so!

Q. K'i Kono gni bri, ka gni bri, gna bara.

A. O k'a ké.

Q. Ni e ma fo ma yé, k'i disi soubaou ma. K'i son sila, k'i son kénéyala! If you keep the secret may he save you from the souba, may he give you descendants and health!

"Tell me, what have you on your head? Yourlife is henceforth bound with gnâma-n-fou (bark of Bauhinia reticulata): if you talk, /188/ if you reveal our mysteries, may your abdomen swell, may the Komo kill you, may he tear out your organs, may he tear out your heart, may he break your head without your brain coming out, without blood flowing."

This ceremony in the night, in the light of the little fires that distort the shadows and lengthen them, impresses, pierces, and grips the youths, and they are heard to answer all atremble in these words that at every moment break through the nasal tone of the pipes and

881 796 794 the trumpet blasts: "I have the kala (1) on my head, my life is hence-

1. Kala, "handle of a tool," "a pestle," "an oblong object"; Komo kala, iron tube ending in two horns.

forth bound with gnâma-n-fou; if I reveal the secrets of the sect, may my abdomen swell and may the Komo kill me." Then they get up, 881 796 794 539 and the crowd of initiates sing hymns to the Komo at the tops of their voices:

Da Woro la nana, Boloko déou da Worola.
To the festival of Da Woro he (the fetish) has come, to Da Woro of the circumcised (he has come).
Toro ma na kola gnini.
Toro (2) has not come to cause evil.

2. Toro, the name of a Komo.

Sira bo nin ye, ko dougoulé dén.
To him we give an (open) road because (he is) a child of the village.
Sira bo nin yé, ko dougoulen sira.
Give him an (open) road to know the road of the children of the village (He is one of us, let us make room for him) (3).

3. Songs of Nama:
A djigina so Nama fambali, a djigina so, tjon k'a'é.
The Nama that kills has paid us a visit, he has visited us*, let us not be

[266]

*The Nama protects against the souba, initiates of siri, reputed to be cannibals.

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neglectful toward him (let us welcome
the Nama who comes to visit us).
A fiérela ka den, boli fiérela ka den.
He has blossomed to have fruits, the
boli has blossomed to have fruits
(the Nama has had a child).
Souba yo nin kéra ma lo ko yé.
Souba yo. This is done because of shame.
Souyaya kéra dabali bé an koyé.
The practice of the souba has been done
(among us), we have a means of pro-
tecting ourselves from it. /189/

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While these hymns are being sung, the circumcised boys dance with the idol -- this is the standard expression to signify that for the first time they are executing the lascivious motions of the sacred dance.

And when they get back to their places, they are transformed, they are no longer the plain, good children who, even the day before, approached you nicely with a frank smile on their lips. They have become Bambara, and we, we are white men and strangers, masters and conquerors, and between them and us an abyss has been opened. And this abyss is opened further every day, for every time the god Komo comes out of its temple and out of the dirty foroko (goatskin) that serves as its tabernacle, they will go under the sacred trees, and will strengthen their faith and harden their hearts (1). Henceforth

1. The initiates of powerful boli's sect make a sort of "renewal of vows" a year after their admission. Those of the Komo, who are given the name of timini deou, hold a festival to break all records; there is meat and gruel to spare, and the divine liqueur, d'lo, or millet beer, is plentiful.

they will be at home in every part of the Sudan; they need not fear

881 796 794 the poison that kills the inquisitive and the traitors, and wherever they are asked the question, "Are you of the Komo?", they can give the password, draw two crossed lines in the sand, and then, holding the thumb, the middle finger, and fourth finger in the hand, extend the forefinger and the little finger over this mark, saying to the questioner, "I am one of you."

I have noted here the verbal text of these questions and the answers to give them.

For the Komo

Q. E b'a la Wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Ne b'a la. I am.
Q. N'i b'a la, tjoko djira anna? If you are, show us the sign.
A. Ka'i ta Drahamé.

In saying these words bend the thumb, the middle finger, and the fourth finger while extending the forefinger and the little finger. /190/

II.

Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. Tjoko djira anna wé? Show us the sign.
A. Da sigi da da la.

Place a container on the mouth of a container. While saying these words, place the feet one in front of the other, and immediately add: Djan kéné ouala djan djala. Make two parallel lines in the dust.

III.

Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Komo?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. E n'i so mâou benna mi ni? And where did you and your people meet?

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A. An benna dlaba da la, ou bi gouélé foura bosi. We met at the door of dlaba; they pick the leaves of the gouélé (false ebony) (1).

1. For the Nama.
Q. E b'a la wa? Are you of the Nama?
A. Né b'a la. I am.
Q. Féré tjon k'an.
Two straws are laid in a cross of
St. Andrew and shown to you.
A. Nin yé sira gné bo la yé. This is the road that guides, lights.
Q. A perpendicular straw is laid down.
A. Nin yé wara sé n-yé. Wara ti tama sén ko. This is the foot of a wild animal*.

* The boli are often given the epithet of wara, "wild animal," meaning "strong," "powerful."

A wild animal does not walk without legs.

Sirima-n-fign: this word is the family name, the diamou of Nama. End of the questions: Dja e b'a la koï! Dja (exclamation) you surely are /of the Nama/.

Through the whole night there are howls of wild animals, songs and lascivious dances, bellowings of trumpets freezing one with fear, and the nasal and piercing sounds of the pipes.

At dawn a warada, speaking into the horned tube, thanks those present in the name of the god Komo; a second repeats his words into a pipe, and a djélima (storyteller /griot/ of the Komo) repeats the words of the god in plainer terms to those present. And the /191/ crowd gives thanks, utters cries, makes its requests. Everyone retires exhausted, worn out, with his throat on fire and foam on his lips,

reeling on his legs -- in these festivals one must get drunk to please the god.

While all these things are happening outside, the women and little girls on the public square abandon themselves to their hearts' content. They perform none of the leaps and capers customary at ordinary festivals: shaking in their hands the goatskin bag or the white iron box full of little stones, they circle slowly, with short steps, around the orchestra, and only their buttocks move. These roll to the right and roll to the left, dip forward and quickly draw back -- a movement which is definitely not graceful. The excised girls spend the night sitting on mats covered with white cloths, between the legs of their mothers or serving women, and their heads, loosely thrown back, rest on the breasts whence they drew their life. They are wrapped in covers that have blue stripes on white background, only their heads showing, and one might say this was a display of new, shiny dolls with big black eyes, happy and all sparkling with joy. From time to time at the invitation of the dancers who sing of their grace and beauty, they shake their pierced gourds, make them rattle in their hands, and take part in the dance; then at dawn, in the morning, in a final round, they put their heels together and three times make three leaps in the air with their hands crossed on top of their heads.

And, if one believes the Negroes, this custom is not without meaning. The whitecloth on an excised girl's mat reminds the mother of one of the beautiful days of her life, the one when she gave herself to her husband in the bonds of marriage, and reminds the child hidden in her arms, wrapped in the cover like an infant in its cloths, that since she has now become a grown girl and has left childhood, she must guard her virginity. This large white cloth will testify for her on the day of her marriage as it testified for her mother, and it will be inexorable. The circle around the orchestra in short steps is the infant practicing its first steps; but now she has reached her full development, /192/ she can be sufficient to herself, and for that reason she makes these nine leaps with her hands crossed on top of her head.

As soon as the sabbath of the sons of the Komo is terminated outside, the excised girls are led back to their huts with great pomp, with music in the lead, and the festival still goes on, for a Bambara

764 which is nothing less than disguised slavery. In the presence of a
782 European the Negroes like to complain that he cannot meet their taxes, but they should not be listened to too closely -- 99 times out of 100 they are lying! Let us not make war against the military or civil official responsible for levying the tax, which is not at all exorbitant; let us think before all about the boli and their staffs, a band of persons without principles or law, human vultures with greedy fingers who attack the weak, the widows and orphans, terrify them with their threats of death. They do not leave these people in peace until they have taken everything: hens, goats, dogs, cowrie shells, sorghum, and often freedom.

6. Respects Paid to Initiates of the Koré, or Koté

794 The initiates of a fetish are never indifferent to the death of a
766 brother, and they hasten to find a hen and a kola nut with which to prove their attachment to the deceased and to assuage the wrath of the god. The sect of koré does things in a grand, even in a ceremonious, manner, if there is any ceremony in those nocturnal orgies where d'lo, or millet beer, is drunk to /229/ the point of senselessness, and where lascivious and obscene dances are danced.

When a young man who is koré dé (son of koré, initiate of the
[778] sect) dies, relatives and friends redden with blood the sacred tree and the kara, a perforated board painted red and white, which is the genie's emblem. Although there is general mourning in the village, tears are dried when evening comes, and for three nights there is nameless
[785] bedlam and endless shouting in the kore tou (the sacred grove) as initiates flagellate themselves, burn their backs with torches, tear their bodies with thorns, abandon themselves to their barbaric dances,
[534] and lose themselves in lewd gestures in front of the dénouba (drums measuring from one to one and a half meters) and the kingé (a triangle, an iron tube, which is hung from the thumb of the left hand and which is struck with a ring or an iron nail placed on the little finger).

For the old people who are granted not a tear nor a regret but for whom there are dances and songs, fellow initiates come in large numbers, and during the night preceding the burial, they make a

794 766 bedlam and racket in front of the corpse, which is displayed under the great trees that shade the entrance of the village. That is a most lugubrious and macabre rite! After the burial for three successive nights, the same respects are paid to the deceased in front of the fetish tree in the koré tou (sacred grove), and if the deceased was a koré tigi (head of the sect of koré), a gnéna-n-sonnaba (head of the village and priest of the dasiri), a bolitigi (master of a boli), a flélikéla (famous sorcerer), a gouatigi (family head), a souroukou tigi or a korodouga tigi (head of a group in the sect (1)), they often continue

1. See my chapter on the koré, or koté.

their orgies for eight days running, gorging themselves with d'lo (beer), and getting drunk.

794 769 The anniversaries of the old people, those who had fame, authority, and especially authority in the sect, are observed regularly every year, and on that day there is a memorial to members of the family who belonged to the sect. Youths in large numbers come from all directions to abandon themselves to barbaric dances, and since beer flows in streams, the drinking bout that takes place is indescribable. /230/ Only a family reduced to the blackest poverty would neglect to offer d'lo (millet beer).

794 769 185 On the morning that follows these dances in honor of a deceased koré dé, a saraka is placed with great ceremony at the dankoun ba (1)

1. Dankoun, a corner of land formed by two paths that cross; dankoun ba, "great dankoun," the dankoun most popular in the village.

of the village. It consists of the remains of the torches of the tatougoula (2), the bent, broken, and unraveled whips of the bisatjila

2. Tatougoula, those who dance with fire.

(3), the thorn brooms of the woni sama (4), and finally the leafy branch

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3. Bisatjila, those who flagellate themselves.

4. Woni sama, those who scratch themselves with thorns.

used by the korodouga (5) to drive away the sparks crackling on the

5. Korodouga, clowns, storytellers /griots/ of the sect.

backs of the tatougoula.

7. Burial of the Excommunicated

766 Those with sores, lepers, and persons killed by a fetish who did not accept their sacrifice may be said to be excommunicated. No adult who dies without hair on his head or body has the right to the honor of a Bambara burial, and he is given that of lepers.

A leper is never buried in the common cemetery; he is sent far off into the bush to a separate place. The more usual custom, actually, is to slip the corpse into a hollow baobab (Adansonia digitata) with a small, live pullet as companion -- or an egg, if the deceased is a girl. The same fate befalls a bald person.

The reason for this custom is that this class of people have been abandoned by the Creator and the spirits, all of whom scorn them and withdraw from them. If ever the ground where ancestors rest should receive the remains of one of these accursed ones, their bones would shake with disgust. Moreover, they would take revenge for having to rest near people who during their lifetime were without hair; they would be deaf to every prayer and would refuse every sacrifice. The village and the entire region there would suffer a total lack of rain, a drought without any equal, in short, a famine with all its horrors. /231/

766 The victim of a boli may also become for the village and the region an impure, base creature that has lived all too long. This happens when the murdering, or supposedly murdering, fetish three times refuses the sacrifices offered to appease it (1). When this occurs

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1. A sacrifice is not accepted if the hen charged with giving the god's answer dies on its breast with its feet under it, and the kola nut, cut in two, falls on its pulp with the rounded part on top.

the whole family, men, women and children, must still their cries and must not weep, however great their sorrow may be. Family heads abandon themselves to sacrifices, the initiates of the sect do the same, and everybody thanks the boli for having caused the death of a person who deserved only scorn and should never have lived, and begs never to meet such a fate nor to be like him.

766 794 When the grave has been dug (a plain grave without a niche), the men of the murdering boli (2) come and wrap the corpse in a mat.

2. When a boli has killed someone, it is the men of that boli who come to bury him. It is not always a boli of the village, but sometimes from a distance of one, two, or three days' journey, and if the men of that fetish cannot come at once, e. g., if they are elsewhere burying a man killed by the god, people close the door of the hut in which the corpse lies and wait until the gravediggers choose to arrive. I saw the corpse of a blacksmith left like this for four full days. The sorcerers are the ones who name the boli and the village where it is.

766 When they have sewed and tied it well, they take it on their shoulders
794 and head on the double for the exit door. There they stop and without any respect roughly set the body down. Armed with picks they make an opening in the wall of the hut and, seizing the corpse by the feet, they drag it and put it into this opening. Strong hands seize it from the outside, they pull and the others push, and the excommunicated one comes out of his dwelling and appears in the alley or on the square.
[482] Four fellows -- sons of the fetish, for they alone are present at these burials -- take him on their shoulders and, running, carry him to the cemetery. At the edge of the grave they put down their load, the initiates give a loud cry, a sort of roar, and they roll him with their feet into his final home. For such people there is not the slightest farewell or prayer, and the grave is filled at once.

In the evening the fetish is brought out, and the initiates abandon
[189] themselves to their sacred dances, while the god, in the hands of its priests, /232/ runs about the village and its environs, exorcising. All night long nothing is heard but the bellowing of horns and trumpets and sacred hymns shouted by the crowd, and from a distance one would say they were dull rumblings or the actual cries of wild animals.

8. Worship accorded to the Dead

769 At the death of a Bambara not the slightest sacrifice is directed either to him or to the deceased of the family. However, the worship of the dead is prevalent among the Bambara, althought it cannot be compared to the worship of the genii, especially of the boli. Nevertheless, everyday one can see, at the door of one family or another, a large splash of blood on the wall about a meter from the ground, a brownish octopus one might say, throwing its twisted arms here and there and struggling against a clump of feathers stuck on its back with the juice of a chewed kola nut. Some people have seen in this worship the basis of the Negro religion and, no doubt because they did not know the language and have been unable to give an exact meaning to the words caught by their ears, they have portrayed the Bambara with knife always in hand, ready to slaughter in honor of his relatives. Because they group together all saraka and sacrifices,

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Sacred dance in honor of the N'tomo, the children's fetish.

/sub-caption: The hut with a conical roof, on the right, is the temple of the boli fetish Nia. /

4: Henry--268 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8